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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help people improve their reading, writing, and numeracy skills within existing organizations, services, or community activities. It is divided into two sections. The first gives some background information on literacy in Canada, adult learners, and the rationale for integrating learning into existing opportunities. The second focuses on implementing the approaches. Planning and organizing learning initiatives, recruiting participants, developing options and opportunities for improving skills, training volunteers, and evaluating the effectiveness of an approach are addressed in the second section. In addition, some misconceptions about people with reading difficulties are addressed. Profiles of adult learners are included as well as approaches suitable for facilitating adult learning. An overview of the planning, organizing, and implementing process is provided. A range of options to take advantage of learning opportunities is discussed: peer learning, learning with computers, family involvement, and learning through oral stories. Steps in planning and implementing workshops for volunteers are outlined. A section on evaluating the progress of learning initiatives and individuals as well as 43 references complete the guide. (NLA)

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AN INSIDE APPROACH:

Organizing Integrated Learning Opportunities

by: Christine Camilleri
Lise de Villiers
Philip Fernandez
Gordon Nore
Brent Poulton
Sarah Thompson
Ed Wadley

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PREFACE

During a labour dispute at Bell Canada two years ago, managers were asked to staff the switchboards and assist callers. What they experienced was very surprising to them, although it was familiar to the regular staff. They found that some callers were unable to write down the number they were given, some could not find information in the white or yellow pages, others could not read their phone bills.

"When I was on the lines," said one manager, "I had a young man call who needed to get his muffler fixed. I directed him to look in the yellow pages under muffler. He told me in a shy voice that he couldn't read and asked if I would help him. He asked me to tell him on which page the muffler shops were listed. In this way, he said, he could then look at the word muffler and phone those companies that showed that word."

Literacy is a basic right. This was stressed in the "Declaration of the Right to Learn," adopted in 1985 at the UNESCO 4th International Conference on Adult Education: "Recognition of the right to learn is now more than ever a major challenge for humanity: the right to question and analyze; the right to imagine and create; the right to read about one's own world and to write history; the right to have access to educational resources; the right to develop individual and collective skills." The ability to communicate in a literate society provides a powerful way to influence and control one's future. Literacy encourages independent thinking. It expands the range of choices available and, by doing so, increases the ability to make informed decisions.

Last year Frontier College and Bell Canada launched a program called Partners in Learning. Its aim is to provide educational materals to individuals interested in adding literacy services to their organization or community resources. This guidebook is the main product of that venture. We hope that the ideas presented here will inspire you to carry forward your own plans for making learning an integral part of your organization's resources.

Christine Camilleri
Project Coordinator
Partners in Learning
October 1990

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A final note of thanks to Bell Canada. Without their generous financial support, this guide would not have been possible. Their foresight and commitment have significantly contributed to the awareness of literacy in Canada and the need for action.

The Writing Team:

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Frontier College, Toronto

October 1990

INTRODUCTION

This guide is for anyone who wants to organize effective ways to help people improve their reading, writing, and numeracy skills within existing organizations, services, or community activities.

People who come together within such a community do not necessarily feel the strong sense of identification that we often associate with the term community. But, they do share a number of things in common. Often, they share a similar interest or fate. They get to know one another, even if on a superficial level, through regular contact. They spend a certain amount of time, on a regular basis, doing something together.

This guide is based on the premise that these communities offer many natural opportunities for developing reading, writing, and numeracy skills without necessarily creating specialized programs. Some of these opportunities are outlined and suggestions are made on how they can be implemented.

We are by no means suggesting that there is no place for specialized programs. Many individuals can benefit from the intensity provided by such programs. Nevertheless, others may feel stigmatized and find it difficult to participate in such a direct way. For these individuals, integrated programs may be more effective.

A recent Statistics Canada survey on the reading skills of Canada's adult population showed that 22 percent of Canadians can use reading materials only to carry out simple reading tasks within familiar contexts with materials that are clearly laid out. However, this group does not have sufficient skills to cope with situations that involve unfamiliar or more complex reading. These situations have tremendous range, including, for example:

- dealing with specialized services such as auto repair shops
- dealing with complex forms and applications
- learning new skills in rapidly changing industries
- learning about rights as consumers and citizens.

Individuals who make up this group are unlikely to seek out specialized help in reading and writing. They are, however, at risk of being unable to function at all in a changing society in a few short years. For this population, finding natural opportunities for increasing reading, writing, and numeracy skills is a more realistic option than expecting them to participate in specialized programs. These natural learning opportunities should make it easier for individuals to:

- gain access to information
- learn how to obtain information and use it
- act on their desire to learn
- help others in similar situations to learn.

This guide can assist people in various communities to develop and act upon such strategies.

The messages and usefulness of the guide lie in the following:

- *It is everyone's problem.* We as individuals and organizations in communities can help one another learn what we need to learn. The people who want to learn are among us.
- *There are practical ways of addressing the problem.* This guide is a primer on organizing and sustaining learning initiatives in the communities in which you live, work, and participate.
- *Integration is a way of life, not a program.* We all have opportunities to identify new things we want or need to learn throughout our lives. This is the reality of lifelong learning. Each of us needs different kinds of places, settings, occasions, and encouragement to learn because this is the way we learn best. Each of us will have different difficulties in organizing our lives so that we can learn what we want to learn, then use it. This is the reality and complexity of everyday life.

The guide is divided roughly into two sections. The first gives some background information on statistics, adult learners, and the rationale for integrating learning into existing opportunities. The second focuses on more practical aspects of implementing the approaches described above. Planning and organizing learning initiatives, recruiting participants, developing options and opportunities for improving reading, writing, and numeracy skills, training volunteers, and evaluating the effectiveness of an approach are the areas addressed in the second section.

Since this guide is not meant specifically for experienced practitioners whose work involves adult learners, some background information is provided to give a context for the issue and its relevance. In addition, some misconceptions about people who have difficulty with reading, writing, and numeracy are addressed. Also, in order to give a face to the statistics, some profiles of adult learners are included, as well as approaches that are suitable for facilitating adult learning.

Building on this background, we explore what we mean by an integrated approach and its implications. We look at how learning can be made a part of the places where we work, socialize, or use for support. An overview of the planning, organizing, and implementing process is also provided. Although by no means comprehensive, this overview gives potential organizers an idea of what they can expect when undertaking a learning initiative.

In order to take advantage of learning opportunities, a range of options is discussed. These can include tutoring, peer learning, learning with computers, family involvement, and learning through oral stories.

In addition, a section is devoted to planning and implementing workshops for volunteers. Whether the learning initiative will include tutoring situations or will facilitate broader learning, this section focuses on how to work with volunteers at a number of levels.

A brief final section on evaluating the progress of learning initiatives, as well as the progress of individuals, is included.

This guide is an attempt to generate more interest and exploration in the area of integrated learning. We have provided some starting points and ideas for developing new approaches. These, however, do not begin to tap the potential that exists in natural learning opportunities. It is our hope that organizers will implement some of the ideas included in this guide and, by doing so, begin tapping this potential.

Miria Ioannou

Bruce Kappel

October 1990

THE WRITERS

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Ed Wadley set off for university wanting to be an actor. After discovering that acting involved poverty and unemployment, he enrolled at Fanshawe College in London in the Broadcast Arts course. In 1982, Ed volunteered as a tutor in the adult literacy program at Frontier College. Soon after, he was offered the job of coordinator of the Independent Studies program. He left the College in 1985, returning after two years to resume his duties.

1

IN SO MANY WORDS... LITERACY IN CANADA

DEFINITIONS OF LITERACY

Literacy isn't very easy to talk about. Although we've come to depend upon the printed word in our daily lives, as a species, we really haven't been "literate" for very long. Still, in that short time, literacy has made possible change and growth of extraordinary proportions. Yet, according to UNESCO — the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — and other international organizations, as many as one billion adults are not literate. (World Conference, 1990) The truth is that we have not even arrived at one suitable definition of what it means to be literate.

However, as an organizer, you may be called upon to explain your work to others. You may need to promote your project to attract volunteers. You may need to make a "pitch" to get funding from governments, foundations, individuals, or companies. But most importantly, in order to make sure that your best efforts reach people most in need, you will need to understand the complexity of the literacy issue.

This section will look at:

- the current statistical discussions of literacy
- the common myths and misconceptions surrounding literacy
- the current face of literacy practice and the pressing need for new ways to help people meet their literacy needs.

Literacy by the Numbers

"Does literacy make people happy? Only highly literate people seem to ask [this] question. And only the well educated seem to say that it does not. They are like the rich who doubt that money makes one happy. Significantly, such doubts come only after they have accumulated enough money and do not have to worry... And so with the highly literate."

— Jeanne Chall

According to the most recent research findings, as many as thirty-eight percent (just under 7 million) of Canadians between the ages of 16 and 69 encounter some difficulty with reading activities in everyday life. The survey findings that follow place literacy on a continuum, rather than saying that X number of people are or are not literate. Canadians' reading abilities were organized into the following levels of proficiency.

Level One: Seven percent (1.2 million) of Canadians polled found dealing with printed materials nearly impossible. According to the survey, people in this group often see themselves as people who don't read.

Level Two: Nine percent (1.6 million) were able to identify only certain familiar printed words in a simple text. Canadians in this group likely see themselves as people who have difficulty with reading.

Level Three: Twenty-two percent (4 million) used print materials productively, provided they were clearly laid out, simply written,

Note:

In this section - and in the sections to follow - we have tried to be careful of the words and phrases we use to describe how well people read, write, and use numbers. We have avoided using words like "illiterates." We have done this because we believe that people should not be defined by how well they read, write, or use numbers. We also believe that people can improve their literacy if they are given the right opportunity. We have therefore chosen words and phrases like "non-reader," "people who can't read," "people who have trouble reading," and so on. While such phrases may be, perhaps, less offensive, there is still a danger that they will be interpreted as life-defining. When you see these phrases, please take them to mean: "People who have not YET learned to read, write or use numbers well enough to meet the literacy demands of everyday life."

For many Canadians, dealing with printed material is nearly impossible.

and involved tasks that were easy to perform. People in this category do not necessarily see themselves as having reading problems because they have structured their lives in such a way that they can control the amount and difficulty of reading they encounter. (Statistics Canada, 1990)

These findings come from the Statistics Canada survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA, 1990). Approximately 9 500 Canadians who had participated in the national Labour Force survey were polled. The participants were asked to perform a number of tasks that involved reading, writing, and using numbers. Participants were allowed to perform these tasks either in English or French.

Following is a sample of the tasks involved:

The Numbers Game

The refusal to acknowledge those who are our sons or daughters, brothers, sisters, neighbours, fellow citizens, or former students, but whom we have relegated to statistical oblivion, holds some dangers that a sane society would not ignore.

— Jonathan Kozol

It is important to note that certain groups of Canadians were not included in this survey: residents of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and native Indian reserves, Canadian Armed Forces personnel, and people living within institutions. Statisticians point out that these people account for about three percent of the adult population and that their inclusion would not significantly alter

Description of task	% of respondents that did not complete the task
Sign a social insurance card	1
Circle expiry date on a driver's licence	6
Locate correct building using a sign	7
Circle the charge on a telephone bill	10
Read aspirin instructions	20
Find a store in the Yellow Pages	25
Find school hours in a pamphlet	41

Source: Statistics Canada, 1990

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the findings. Further, proper representation would require a number of more individually tailored surveys. But these arguments are acceptable *from a statistical standpoint only*. We can surmise from educational and economic data, and from the people themselves, that the number of people within these groups who would have been placed at Level One in the survey far exceeds the national average. Researchers are bound by rules of statistical fair play that make it difficult to include all people in Canada. Practitioners need not be.

It is no surprise that many scholars and educators have given up on trying to make sense of the numbers game of literacy. In their 1975 book, *Adult Illiteracy in the United States*, Carmen St. John Hunter and David Harmen entitled one section, "Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics." In it they describe the debate and disagreement over not only how many adults cannot read, but precisely what constitutes an adult — that is, at what age a person should be included in discussions of adult literacy!

Another concern about attempts to survey functional literacy on a national scale is that the tasks required in the surveys are frequently culturally, economically, and geographically biased, so that not all Canadians can relate to them. While this is probably true, a parallel argument must be made that the very fact that people have trouble reading and writing may be the reason why they cannot relate to these tasks and activities. Further, perhaps in a changing world, it is important that people be able to use literacy skills to do things they have never done before. Thus, surveys that challenge participants with new and unfamiliar tasks may likely produce more accurate or useful findings.

For example, in 1987 Southam Communications published a survey of 2 400 adults from across the nation, which found that eleven percent of people surveyed were unable to sign a social insurance card. Statistics Canada reported that fewer than one percent of people were unable to do this. The difference was the people in the Southam survey were required to read the documentation that normally accompanies applying for a social insurance card. People in the Statistics Canada survey were simply asked to sign a facsimile of the card. Both findings are useful. On the one hand we know that almost everyone can sign his or her name. We also know that many people may be placed in the dilemma of having to add their signatures to documents they may not understand. (Calamai, 1987)

Attempts have been made in Canada and elsewhere to place a dollar cost on illiteracy. The Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy commissioned a report in Canada in 1988. The report suggested the cost of illiteracy to Canadian industry was in excess of $4 billion in the form of industrial accidents, mistakes, and increased supervisory time. When other costs were added, like unemployment benefits, prisons, and lost wages, the national figure came to more than $10 billion dollars. (Woods Gordon, 1988) Such findings, if not carefully presented, can easily have a backlash effect on people who cannot read. Thus, when promoting your programming, it is important to be very careful about emphasizing negative aspects of the literacy issue. Rather, emphasis should be placed on the positive aspects of literacy for individuals and for society.

Beyond the Numbers Game

[The right to learn] must be recognized as one of the fundamental rights. The act of learning, lying as it does at the heart of all educational activity, changes human beings from objects at the mercy of events to subjects who create their own history.

— UNESCO

So far, we have been discussing measures of "functional literacy" and their implications. Such a discussion helps us to appreciate the magnitude of the problems associated with illiteracy. But there is much more to the issue that cannot be learned by literacy surveys. Surveys can measure, to a certain degree of accuracy, performance and skill; they cannot measure empowerment, creativity, or self-awareness. They also cannot measure feelings of frustration, humiliation, or defeat.

Surveys cannot capture the delight of reading to your children.

There is no measure to describe the relief a traveller feels, late at night in a train station, when she finds a book in her jacket pocket to read as she waits to go home. Surveys cannot tell us anything about the joy a parent feels during that moment of shared discovery when he is reading with his children. Nor can surveys measure the frustration of not being able to take advantage of a less expensive no-name product because it bears no picture of its contents. No tool has been devised that describes the sense of frustration felt by someone attempting to locate safe, non-prescription medication for a sick child. The minute, daily triumphs that escape the notice of many people who read stand in contrast to the endless disappointments of those who cannot.

Life Without Print

Emphasize our capabilities, not our disabilities; give us the chance to learn, don't label us as problems.

— literacy workshop participants

When preparing this guide we were cautioned quite eloquently by a learner to be careful when describing the condition of people who have trouble reading, writing, and using numbers. She reminded us of how easy it is to portray people who can't read as helpless and unfulfilled. Indeed, the traditional definition of literacy, according to UNESCO, describes literacy in terms of individual participation in the community of one's choosing. The implication is dangerous: people who cannot read do not participate. We should say here, then, that the lack of literacy skills makes full participation much more difficult, that it sets up additional barriers, that people who cannot read must find alternate ways to achieve full participation.

We were also reminded that people use what resources they have at their disposal. People who cannot read have not been properly recognized for this. They are frequently depicted in the media as people who "bluff their way out of difficult situations." Other descriptions tell us that people "devise ingenious strategies" to cope in daily life. Both perspectives are problematic. The first suggests that the prime function of people who cannot read is to deceive those who can. The second assigns almost supernatural powers of intelligence and memory.

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Neither recognizes the capacity that is within all of us — to survive, to work from our strengths, to meet challenges one at a time as best we can.

We will continue this discussion with an additional word of caution. This is a book, created by writers. You are a reader, receiving messages, making interpretations and thinking about future actions. This is a part of what we call literacy. Literacy is not a switch. You cannot turn it off at will. You, as a reader, cannot know what it is like to be unable to read. You can make comparisons, such as being in a foreign country where the language is unfamiliar to you, but you cannot separate your adult life and experiences from your literacy skills. This fact should not prevent us from discussing illiteracy. But there is a difference between experience and expertise. Only from a partnership of the two can responsive and accessible programming result.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Introduce the topic of literacy in a discussion in your community, and you will get a flurry of opinions and some heated debate. Almost everyone will have an idea of what literacy is, the literacy skills people need to get by, and why they didn't learn to read and write in the past. It is not the intention of this section to prove which opinions are right or wrong, but to contribute to their discussion. The following are some thoughts to help you guide discussions around the issue:

The Dimensions of the Issue

People will frequently ask why there are so many people who have difficulty with reading and writing. There is not a simple answer to this question. Many literacy practitioners say that the number of reasons equals the number of people who cannot read. There are, however, some patterns worth examining: it is relatively safe to say that the more schooling one has had, the more likely one is to be literate. But this is not always the case. Some achieve enormous powers of literacy with very little schooling. For others, the reverse is true. Literacy, the interaction of people and printed ideas, does not just take place in school. We become literate because we have had meaningful opportunities to do so. For some, unhappy experiences in early life interrupted learning. Others had to leave school to go to work or to war, and did not have the opportunity to renew their relationship with print. Still others have been getting along just fine, but changes in their lives have created new literacy challenges for which they are not prepared. Finally, others, segregated from the mainstream because of a debilitating label, have simply been cut off from opportunities to learn.

The Role of Learning Disabilities

What is it about our educational and social systems that allow early verdicts to young children about their adult potential? Why should a handicapping condition be used as a rationale for slanting the curriculum away from academic subjects? Why do we spend less time teaching those who need the most time to learn?

— Tracy Odell

Inevitably, the question of learning disabilities will enter the discussion. There is enormous confusion and debate about the extent of learning disabilities. Part of this stems from the fact that many educators cannot agree on a suitable definition. Certainly there are people who possess physical disabilities, such as impaired vision or hearing, which make learning to read in conventional ways more difficult. However, advances in computer technology, special needs devices, and additional training for educators nullify any argument that a disability can interfere with learning. The problem, in fact, is not the person with the disability, but our tendency to segregate people who have different needs. Thus, we create an entirely segregated setting in which people who need more help and more time to learn receive less of both and are denied interaction with people who can read. While it is true that everyone learns differently, and that individual strengths vary, the fact is that everyone can learn.

The Responsibilities of Schools and Parents

Invariably, discussions of adult literacy issues turn to children and schools. While our educational system may not meet everyone's needs, at the same time, it would be unfair to suggest that our education system is in complete ruin. Thousands of Canadian students graduate high school every year and go on to college, university, skilled job training, or other continuing education. Indeed, we must say in fairness that we have an education system that serves those who are college and university bound very well. It is those who are not college or university bound whose needs are less often met. These are the people on whom we should concentrate. Another fact is that many people did not get the chance to go to school. Schools are only equipped to supply an education to those who attend them.

While on the topic of children and schools, your discussion may enter the area of parental responsibilities. People may question whether it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure their children overcome difficulties with reading and writing. There are two problems with leaving it up to the parents to ensure children get a good education. First, it automatically excludes adults who have difficulty with reading, writing, and using numbers. Second, literacy and illiteracy are frequently passed along through the generations. People who cannot read should not be blamed for not supplying their children with literacy skills, which they themselves were denied. This kind of thinking also places unreasonable demands on people whose lives are overtaxed by poverty, work, child care, and other concerns.

Literacy and Social Problems

People are not always poor because they are illiterate, but they are far more apt to be illiterate if they are poor.

— Carmen St. John Hunter

What may have been middle-class folklore is now national ideology; that ideology depends on experts proving that the poor are incompetent, and that is why they are poor.

— Kathleen Rockhill

Discussions of related issues in the lives of people who cannot read may lead to inaccurate and ill-conceived notions of cause and effect. It is true that there tend to be higher rates of illiteracy among isolated, dispossessed, and disenfranchised populations of people (e.g. many of the people excluded from literacy surveys). However, their challenges with respect to literacy may be a co-factor or result of their circumstances and not a direct cause of them. You can balance this argument by asking others — and yourself — how they would feel if defined only by their ability to read and write, or only according to challenges they face, not their abilities to overcome them.

I'd like to be able to read some of the books about asthma. My youngest has asthma, and he gets real bad when the pulp mill is heavy. My husband got these books from the doctor but the words are too hard for me. I keep them on the shelf.

— Susan, a survey participant

The same is true of health matters. A 1989 report published by Frontier College and Ontario Public Health Association examined the link between lower levels of literacy and poor health and poor health practices. While it found that people who could not read tended to be less healthy than those who read well, the reasons for this relationship were far from simple. It found that people's health and safety were not placed at risk by a lack of literacy, nor by a lack of information, but by a lack of access to information. Indeed, many people understood the need for healthy and safe practices at home and at work, but were unable to use them, not because they couldn't read, but because information was presented in ways that did not reflect the realities of their everyday lives.

LITERACY PRACTICE IN CANADA

Programming concerned specifically with

helping adults to become more literate is a relatively new idea. Laubach Literacy Action, an international organization based in Syracuse, New York, has had programming available in Canada since the mid-seventies Although literacy has always been a component of Frontier College programs, formal acknowledgement of the issue as a focal point for programming did not come until 1975 when the College launched New Frontiers in Literacy, a literacy program for inmates in Manitoba Correctional Facilities. More free-standing, community-based programs and agencies followed. Throughout the 1980s, small programs, designed to meet the needs of people within their communities and neighbourhoods, popped up here and there throughout the country. Many such organizations and programs operate under tight budgets, with a small staff and limited resources, and they frequently depend on volunteers to carry out at least part of the instruction and administration.

Funding for community-based literacy programming is generally administered provincially and locally. Such programs do not always fit easily into the funding formulas of their provincial governments, which control educational expenditures. At the same time, much of federal funding of late has been earmarked for national programming. This has left many community- based programs in a delicate financial state, having to depend on fund-raising activities and annual grants from government departments and foundations to sustain themselves. While funding has increased significantly, so have the pace, size, and demand for programs.

Coalitions like the Movement for Canadian Literacy and various regional, territorial, provincial, and local umbrella groups have appeared throughout the eighties to build awareness in the community, link together existing services, and lobby for funding and support from various levels of government. Many coalitions and community-based initiatives make it a policy to have learners on their boards, advisory committees, and task forces. In 1990, a national network of literacy learners was organized in Saskatchewan.

Canada's participation in adult literacy work has received quite a high profile for many years. Frontier College was honoured by UNESCO for "meritorious work in adult literacy" in 1977, as was the Southam Newspaper group in 1989 for its 1987 literacy survey. Along with France and India, Canada was a coordinating country for International Literacy Year. The federal government's five-year commitment of $110 million to literacy, launched in 1988, is to date the greatest per capita dollar commitment made to the issue by any Western country. Yet as of 1987, literacy programming throughout the country served at best two percent of the people in need.

The Future of Literacy

As public awareness and, to a lesser extent, funding have increased, literacy programs have been split into a number of subgroups. Increasingly, there is an interest in prevention programs for children, such as Frontier College's READ CANADA. Family literacy programming is also becoming more popular. Throughout the country, the last few years have seen an increase in funding for "workplace literacy" programming, operated by trade unions, voluntary agencies, community colleges, and school boards. More individualized, self-operating literacy programming is also being created to meet the needs and interests of native Indians, francophone communities, and people in rural settings.

This widespread variety of interests in literacy has sparked concern. Will programming for those already employed take precedence over programming for unemployed, economically disadvantaged adults? Will "prevention" take the place of programming for older adults? Will upbeat promotional activities attract more funding and support than programs that serve isolated and less influential people? Will short-term saturation of the issue in the

media create the mistaken belief that the problem has been solved?

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

I don't know any ...[people who can't read]... who want to compete with the Japanese. They want to read to have some power, to have some potency, to know the past, to judge the present, to transform the future.

— Jonathan Kozol

Almost everything that we know and every bias we have about people who can't read is based largely on our knowledge of the relatively few people that literacy programs have been able to work with. Yet, the Southam survey revealed some interesting facts. The survey reported that as many as half of the people considered not literate said that they do not see themselves as being held back by a lack of reading and writing skills. Ten percent reported that they would not participate in a literacy program.

In the few short years that individuals and organizations in Canada have committed themselves to literacy programs, we have only scratched the surface in terms of finding ways to meet people's literacy needs. If people who cannot read say that they do not need or want to be in literacy programs, that is their right. This does not mean, however, that they do not want to learn. It certainly does not mean that they cannot learn.

Public perception of how literacy programming works, however, has been narrowed by the way it is promoted in the media. The following is a typical scenario:

1. An adult who cannot read becomes frustrated after years of hiding his or her disability.

2. He or she takes a brave step and comes forward and admits to being unable to read or write.

3. On the advice of a friend, the person enrols in a local literacy program, finds a tutor, and learns to read.

Certainly this has happened. We have seen many such adult literacy "success stories." And this happens often enough within literacy programs that we should believe we are on the right track in helping people to learn how to read and write. But we also know that adults who cannot read should have a variety of options. Must the desire to learn how to read come only from repeated failure and disappointment? Does a person have to "admit" to not being able to read? Must a person always have to place his or her literacy needs to the forefront of life in order to begin learning?

Clearly this model is not for everyone. Free-standing literacy organizations must continue to exist, not to meet all people's literacy needs, but to meet the needs of those who wish to use that service. Further, in many communities we have visited throughout the country, this kind of programming is not always possible. In small developing communities in the North, for example, the voluntary sector is frequently stretched to its limits. In others, there is not the money nor the demand for a free-standing service. In others still, people who would use this service cannot spare the time.

An Integrated Approach to Literacy

The desire to learn and the desire to function and participate exist within all people, regardless of their literacy skills. For many people, participating in a literacy program is a low priority among many other goals and responsibilities: seeking employment, caring for children, locating needed financial assistance. Yet literacy and learning can play a role in each of these desires and more. Indeed, many free-standing literacy programs that use student-centred learning approaches rely on students to express such goals so that they can build a curriculum.

The Next Step

People for whom literacy and academic skills are not the first priority deserve to be taken seriously. Literacy skills may be an important component for their future well-being, but their diagnosis of need — not ours—should be the basis for program development.

— Carmen St. John Hunter

The following sections of this guide offer suggestions for carrying this model one step further. Rather than creating stand-alone programs, this guide suggests that opportunities for increasing reading, writing, and numeracy skills ought to be integrated into the services that people use. With this option, literacy becomes a resource, a tool for meeting the real-life needs that people have.

Before we can understand why this is so, we must be able to recognize and understand the people who will benefit from an integrated program. We already know a great deal about reading and writing, and perhaps about how to teach reading and writing. We need to know more about people.

2 PROFILES IN ADULT LEARNING

WHO ARE ADULT LEARNERS?

To the sociologist, economist, politician and demographer, adult learners are many things, most of which have little to do with the actual life experiences of the adult learners themselves. The following biographical sketches and composites give, we hope, a clearer idea of what a cross-section of learners would be like.

Andre

Andre was labelled a "slow-learner" at elementary school. He completed grade ten and soon found plenty of job opportunities at a local lumber mill. Without planning a long stay, he soon found himself settled into his well-paying position and was busy raising a family. His wife has done most of the family paperwork (finances, mostly) but has been too busy with her own job and the children to coach Andre in these areas. At work, Andre must bid for a supervisor's position soon or face unemployment, because the mill is laying off people. Though he has seniority, he cannot do the statistics and write the reports that are required for that position. Andre initially visits your free job-counselling service inquiring about training programs for supervisors, but your relaxed approach soon enables him to confide what he really wants to do is to improve his reading and writing skills.

Louise

Louise, a 40-year-old woman, already had a family to care for at age 19. She had to leave school before getting her diploma, and the breakup of her marriage a few years later left her alone, in low-paying restaurant jobs. While she always had a knack for numbers, Louise had to memorize menu items to process orders in her jobs. Her own children have now left home and Louise is temporarily off work with a back injury. She comes to your agency as a participant in a job-skills program for social assistance recipients. She is anxious to improve her reading and writing skills, and thinks she can also be a math tutor while she waits to get back to work.

Dan

Dan has worked at the same job in the warehouse department of a large manufacturing firm for fifteen years. He has led a fascinating life, you think, with his work across Canada. In the aftermath of a marriage breakup, only his youngest child still lives with him, and he is determined to help this daughter excel at school, as neither Dan nor his oldest child had. You are a local Big Sisters agency staff person who first meets Dan when he applies for a big sister for his daughter. Dan is concerned that he doesn't have the reading skills necessary to help his daughter, having left school after grade eight. You also discover that his company will soon become fully computerized, a fact that makes Dan worry about his future there.

Eleanor

Eleanor has just turned 70, a milestone that would be more of a celebration if she had more family to share it with. Unfortunately, she finds herself mostly alone in a small Nova Scotia town, and her mobility has been limited in recent months by two hip operations. She hopes to have a special walker soon to assist in getting around town again. You meet Eleanor as a Meals on Wheels volunteer. After her latest operation, Eleanor, fiercely independent, has insisted on taking care of herself at home, with a little outside help. On occasion, Eleanor has asked you to help write letters to her great-niece in Vancouver, as well as a complaint to her local MLA. She has expressed a great interest in working on the literacy skills she never developed as a homemaker in a small coal-mining town. She'd like to write her

own letters, and would be delighted to be a tutor some day for people working at the fish plant nearby, where she understands there is a literacy program.

Mohammed

Mohammed is a new Canadian, a young person educated in Asia to high school completion, but with no English until he arrived here. His work requires only a little paperwork, but what is necessary is both crucial and complicated. He plans to get married next year. Unfortunately, because he didn't understand the union bidding system used at his company, he failed to maintain his seniority on a well-paying job, and has seen his earnings cut by over forty percent, and he is now on the 'bottom rung' of seniority again.

This has all put Mohammed in some tight financial straits, and he has approached your non-profit credit-counselling service for assistance. He has never, until now, had to budget, and seems to be intimidated at the prospect of doing so. He wants to be able to fully understand and participate in this type of information and process at work, and has also expressed an interest in reading in English to the children he soon hopes to have. His spoken English is excellent, but he has always had difficulty with reading and writing, largely because he has rarely been called upon to develop those skills.

Adult learners cut across all socio-economic and cultural barriers. Perhaps one further profile will illustrate this fact:

My Story:

I am in a coordinating position for a small community agency in _____. I have truly enjoyed the work, mostly with people with _____concerns, but I would like more recognition and pay, not to mention more government resources. I have had a fairly happy life, with the advantages of the middle class (more or less), and a college education in _____. Sometimes I feel unfulfilled and wonder if there will be opportunities to learn more in life, while I still have the chance to put it to use. I've been thinking that one good prospect might be to seek a promotion at my agency. A position will soon be open, but will require the kind of _____, budgeting, and computer skills that I have never had. I sometimes think I should take the plunge and get the prerequisite high school math course that will help pave the way for a real shot at this interesting new opportunity. But then I suddenly feel a chill, realizing that the night class, the only local option, is probably full of smart-aleck teenagers who would be able to write equations around me in circles!

For many of us, at different points in our lives, we could put our own name in *My Story*, and it would read quite accurately. We do well to remind ourselves that if we truly adhere to the principles of adult learning (see the following outline), we should not forget that we are all adult learners. It is too easy to think of adult learners as "them." If we can see ourselves in *My Story*, we will have made a fundamental step in becoming a successful facilitator or learner in any kind of adult learning context. What unites all adult learners is their desire to learn and their individual and distinct life experiences.

Most formal education programs now recognize the value of life experience by granting credits in some fashion. Community organizations rarely have the authority to do so. They do, however, have the ability, and the responsibility, to show respect for the life experience adult learners have had. If we can't see a part of ourselves in every adult learner, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes that formal education systems have made throughout the years.

ADULT LEARNING — A GENERAL PROFILE

It may seem obvious to you, but is worth repeating: adult learners are not just like children who are learning to read and write. Ask a twelve-year-old boy to describe himself, and he will probably start with, "I'm in grade eight..." Few adults will define themselves by their learning. No matter how eager they are to learn, this initiative is only a small part of their lives. Also, for adults, the consequences of "mislearning" are often

Adults are identified by a wide variety of roles, experiences, needs, and goals.

considerable. These can include impacts on income, health, workplace safety, and career prospects.

Adult learners sometimes bring more baggage with them than the previous biographies implied. As it has with all of us, life has given them both happy memories and scars from hurts past. Many of the painful memories of adult literacy learners are associated with schooling, with education itself. These memories are often of failure, and, more often still, of name-calling and labelling.

Depending on their perspective, professional or personal, others in our lives often place labels on us, some harmless, others hurtful and limiting. It is common to hear adult learners say they have been described with labels such as *dyslexic, neurotic, perceptual-motor problems, developmental delay, loner, dumb, drop-out, underprivileged.* People are very efficient at absorbing the world's perception of themselves. Do not be surprised if learners express faith in the accuracy of these labels.

Traditional Teaching vs. Adult Learning

To be successful, the facilitation of adult learning needs to be different from the style of learning most of us are familiar with, whether in primary or higher education. In particular, literacy learning needs to be self-directed. Adults rarely have the luxury of time that children do, to sit in a class for months and years, absorbing a wide variety of material whose relevance is determined by others. Adults have goals in mind, things they would like to learn, skills they would like to improve upon. And the acquisition of these goals must be juggled with other goals and responsibilities like work, children, housework, and so on.

It is only in this century that educators have truly acknowledged the need for adult learning programs. It has been barely sixty years since the first faculty of adult education was established in a major North American university. Compared to centuries of educational theory, adult learning really is the "new kid on the block."

Adults have to juggle learning with their daily responsibilities

Traditional teaching:	**Adult learning...**
• *assumes learner is dependent*	• *uses curiosity for motivation*
• *operates from institutional needs*	• *is based on learner-centred needs*
• *motivates through reward and punishment*	• *involves mutually determined goals*
• *tests frequently*	• *uses goal reaching to measure success*
• *makes little use of students' past experiences*	• *sees experience as valued resource*
• *uses formal authority and competitive framework*	• *is informal and mutually respectful*
• *is evaluated for success by teacher*	• *follows projects of inquiry*
• *follows course guidelines step by step*	• *assumes an increasingly autonomous learner*
• *transmits knowledge and wisdom*	
• *strives for teacher-determined goals*	*(adapted from Malcolm Knowles, 1975)*

What is obvious to someone paying close attention to recent trends in education is that the descriptions of adult learning are now being heralded as necessary ingredients for any successful learning endeavour. If that is your perception too, the list can be used as a reminder of the inadequacies of traditional teaching and the fact that our approach to teaching adult learners is even more important than our teaching content.

The willingness to learn implies an acceptance of the inevitability of change. Any

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real learning involves, to some extent, the break-up of our past world and its reconstruction in light of new information. To be sure, new ideas and approaches add to existing foundations of knowledge, but sometimes they challenge those old beliefs too, some of which we feel are crucial to our security and sense of self. Human beings are all anxious to make sense of the world around them. When cherished opinions of the world are challenged, we can feel embarrassed and vulnerable. We are at the crossroads of change. Too many of us will turn back to secure beliefs and the status quo; we all have experience in doing this. To be a true learner, in any sense, means forging ahead in spite of fears.

Adult learners, without exception, have bravely opened themselves up to the possibility of unprecedented personal change. The role of the tutor is to help facilitate change, as well as learning.

Facilitators and tutors need to be able to reduce the factors that drive learners to resist change, without cajoling or intimidation. They must ensure that learners have an equal share (at least!) of control over the change that will be tolerated. If they can facilitate positive change by being open and honest in all their interactions with the learner they can build trust. They should also be open to, and prepared for, change themselves.

The Scope of Adult Learning

The scope of adult learning is all-encompassing. It goes beyond the skills needed to read and write. Once these doors are opened, the learners have a new perspective and means of judging their lives and life around them. The kind of learning that occurs on both sides of a tutor/learner relationship not only changes those individuals, but it impacts upon their families, communities, and societies as well.

For example, if, as an indirect result of literacy learning, an adult learner begins to think about the environmental danger of over-consumption, or learns to invest in financial markets to secure his or her family's future, where does one draw the line between what is *basic* learning and what is *higher* learning?

Once again, by underlining the indivisible continuum of learning, from basic skills to

What could be more valuable to a learner than offering your time and yourself?

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ideals to actions, we can see the impact that learning can have on adults.

The Learning Relationship

To many, the idea of teaching adults is intimidating. The feeling of control and superiority may comfort a primary school teacher, but can have no role in this learning relationship. Also, as was mentioned earlier, adult learners are not like empty vessels waiting to be filled with the knowledge we, as tutors or facilitators, can offer. They will have their own ideas about the structure of the class, the content, and your role as well.

A first-time tutor may wonder if his or her teaching skills and credentials are adequate. Do I have enough to offer? You can offer adult learners yourself, a learning relationship together, and your time. What could be more valuable?

Because the curriculum is built around the learner, and because everyone is different, no one can be an expert on the topic of adult learning. What tutors offer is facilitation, a helping hand in enhancing and nourishing existing abilities and pointing out hidden abilities. In this endeavour, adequate orientation (see the following sections on this subject) can provide tutors with some measure of "expertise" in facilitation.

Facilitating learning between equals, between two people knowledgeable about themselves, is obviously different from most of the learning we have experienced. The first requirement is to establish and support the relationship between the two people (or three, or four), for everything else will depend on that relationship. To facilitate the learning relationship we need to:

- Accept learners as they accept themselves. Tutors are not there to cultivate disciples or change a learner's values.
- Involve learners in all aspects of the learning endeavour — this is merely a respectful and courteous way to treat a peer.
- Try to keep the relationship and the sessions connected to the context of a learner's everyday experience. Timing, locale, and subject matter/learning aids have profound influences on potential success, and can either affirm or deny the value of the learner's experience.
- Allow opportunities for success for both (all) of you, early on and frequently.
- Make tutoring comfortable and enjoyable.
- Be honest and respectful in giving feedback.
- Encourage equal and active participation and responsibilityfor success.
- Don't ask for more than you're willing to give.
- Be yourself.

None of these tasks should be particularly daunting. None require specific technical skills. For some people, these tasks involve unlearning some of their own traditional approaches to learning. For all of us, the learning relationship requires that we relinquish control, and accept partnership.

STUDENT CENTRED INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING

SCIL is simply an approach to learning that embodies the principles that are discussed in this section. SCIL is a way of collecting and organizing the elements of a respectful, adult-centred approach to learning into a recognizable whole. There are books that describe SCIL, but its essence is nowhere entombed in a book. It is not a text, there are not prescribed SCIL exercises or levels, and there is no SCIL graduation certificate. SCIL is based, ultimately, upon the relationship between a learner and a facilitator, a relationship that uses the needs and goals of the learner to define itself. SCIL can involve one-to-one tutoring or small groups.

SCIL is a point of re-entry for adults who want to improve their reading, writing, or numeracy skills. SCIL aims to help learners build both practical abilities and self-confidence. SCIL presumes that everyone can learn under the correct conditions.

Through SCIL, adults can develop the skills

and confidence necessary to acquire the next step. For many, that next step often involves returning to more formal "mainstream" education classes. That is acceptable, as far as SCIL is concerned, as long as the goal remains the learner's.

Lifelong Learning in Focus, in Context

Adult learners have pressing concerns in their lives, whether at work, finding work, financial concerns, or family issues. Some of the issues that bring adults to community organizations like yours are, in themselves, extremely stressful.

Adult education is about empowerment, but adults must be empowered as whole people, or not at all. Programs for adult learners must take into consideration all the needs that may impinge on progress, not merely the learning needs. If your group is one that deals with a variety of adult needs besides literacy, this technique will come naturally.

You may find, however, that it is not possible to respond to all the other needs. It is quite reasonable to decide, as well, not to become involved as a personal advocate for an adult learner, either for personal or practical reasons. Where advocacy impinges on the ability of community-service providers and facilitators to nourish and renew their own energy and commitment, it is clearly counter-productive.

Given the perennial understaffing and underfunding of most community agencies, as well as the limitations on the time and effort that staff and volunteers can devote, personal advocacy beyond the call of duty will simply not be an option for many. That is a fair decision to make, and not at all a disservice to learners.

Learning will take place if there is good will and honest effort. Real learning relationships are based on respect and understanding of the individual lives, and they wither without those qualities. If a relationship between the learner and the tutor is to flourish, it must respect the individual needs, choices, and preferences of both people. Like all of us, the adult learner is part of a complex web of relationships.

The literacy learning relationship is a special one, though, in its ability to nurture and support all the other relationships in the web.

The Next Step

Given the situation of most adults—their busy schedules and overwhelming responsibilities—and given the stigma attached to specialized programs, an integrated approach to learning, one that in effect makes the learning of reading, writing, and numeracy a part of what we normally do every day, seems to be a logical option for adults.

To convince others of this fact, others who may have doubts and apprehensions, you will need a well-developed rationale and plan that can be presented to the decision-makers, workers, and participants in your program.

3 INTEGRATING LEARNING PROGRAMS INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION

A RATIONALE FOR INTEGRATED LEARNING INITIATIVES

Our [Frontier College's] challenge is not internal—to double and quadruple our programs and to "dominate" a sector. Bad strategy. Rather, we challenge school boards, community colleges, business, labour, community groups and every citizen to look at what is possible. Take a risk. Do something. It can be small or large. Just start.

— Jack Pearpoint

In the first section we presented an overview of the facts about literacy in Canada: the numbers of people who have difficulty reading and writing, the effects on quality of life, health, employment, which populations are more likely to have difficulty reading and writing, and so on.

Reading and writing, not surprisingly, are necessary skills in everyday life. People with poor reading skills experience isolation from society because they do not often share in human contact through the printed word.

As the first section implied, the problem is two-fold. The need for programs far exceeds the supply, and the people who need to improve their reading and writing skills are inhibited from coming forward by various factors. There are many ways to include people—ways that are not confined to the walls and chalkboard of a classroom. In this section we will discuss how integrated learning programs, by their very nature, are less threatening to individuals who want to learn. The stigma of specialized programs is removed because, ideally, learning to improve reading and writing skills will become part of everyday activities. Moreover, the integrated approach extends the ownership and responsibility for literacy skills development to the community: people in a position to join and help the movement to increase literacy in society.

A Need For Integration

As the statistics in the first section indicate, adult literacy programs are unable to meet the numbers of people who need assistance. Recognizing the problem, community-based literacy programs began to appear about ten years ago. Now there are hundreds of community-based literacy programs and other specialized programs across Canada. Once again, however, the need surpasses the supply. Together, these groups still only reach a small portion of the people who need to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy skills. If we develop learning opportunities as part of everyday activities in places where people gather to work, socialize, or seek support, chances are that the acquisition of skills will be much more successful. Learning, therefore, becomes a more spontaneous and natural act.

By integrating literacy learning opportunities into existing community resources, we will be reaching people who may need to improve their literacy skills, but will not take part in a structured program. The Southam and Statistics Canada surveys showed that among those who have difficulty with written material are people who are employed, who have received a high school education, and who choose not to read. Also, many of the children who are not receiving homework assistance from parents, or who do not learn the value of written language, are more likely to become adults with reading difficulties later on.

Adult Learning

Program development also needs to take into account adult learners' daily lives. Their roles are various and often involve too much responsibility and too little time. They can be parents, spouses, tenants, workers, care

givers, benefit recipients, and so on. Skill building is one among many goals that vie for attention in the lives of many adults. To be successful, a learning strategy must take into account the various roles and responsibilities that affect a person's everyday experiences; it cannot be isolated from these other realities.

Obstacles to Improving Literacy Skills

Personal and social obstacles inhibit many people who want to improve their literacy skills from coming forward. Feelings of embarrassment or inadequacy resulting from a lack of reading and writing skills can act as a significant barrier to other learning.

After a woman has been at the shelter for a few days, we sit down with her and together set out a plan of action that usually includes finding employment and housing.

I recall one woman was always skimming the newspaper, but there was something different about what she was doing. As I watched her each day, I realized it was what she wasn't doing. She would read very intently, turn the pages, but would never write anything down. She seemed to be making no effort to get a job, yet she was a highly motivated person. Some of us began to see her as perhaps lazy, unmotivated, and lacking self-confidence. Yet, this was baffling—during discussions with her she was keen and interested. Finally, she asked one of our volunteers where "I-I-I-Isling-t-t-on" Avenue was, pointing at an ad and reading with difficulty. Then we understood her problem—she had difficulty reading and was not able to tell us this. Now we have a new awareness of the problem and how it affects the work we are trying to do with our program participants.

— a director of an emergency shelter for abused women and their children.

RE-EXAMINING APPROACHES TO LITERACY

There are two main thrusts to any national literacy endeavour — prevention and remediation. The work of adult educators and activists has been to concentrate on the latter thrust, that is, to enable adults with low literacy skills to seek help they need to

Many Canadians are faced with hurdles when they want to improve their literacy skills.

function more competently in their roles as workers, parents, and citizens.

— Audrey Thomas

To be truly integrated, a program must face the challenge of moving beyond teaching adults the basics of reading and writing. Integrating literacy into existing facilities, agencies, services, programs, and so on, means adding something that enhances and works together with what's being done. The following pages will re-examine the definition of literacy by considering the following:

- Literacy learning can involve more than just adults who, for whatever reason, never learned to read or write.
- Literacy learning can move beyond one-to-one tutoring.
- Perhaps society's weakest link isn't the people who can't read and write, but rather the inability of those who can to communicate their messages clearly.

This section will then illustrate how to include and integrate learning strategies into everyday activities where people gather and meet, in the hope of reaching more people.

Beyond the Adult Learner

The practitioner who defines literacy as a set of skills or as the ability to use skills within work, community, or cultural settings is in danger of placing the entire burden of change on the individual adult learner. The people with limited skills become the focus of needed change. On the other hand, when literacy is seen in the context of social realities, then social, political, and economic structures are identified as the focus for needed change. Access to knowledge and the power to create and use social knowledge become the crucial issues.

— Carmen St. John Hunter

Along with focusing programs on helping adults to read and write through tutoring, literacy development should focus on the different ways that skills development can be achieved. Opportunities are limited only by lack of creativity.

Integrated literacy programs can involve many different types of learning, depending on the way the programs are delivered, the various meanings that students give to them, and the perceptions of the organizers. Consider the following scenarios. These examples have been chosen to show an extension of the way we traditionally think of literacy programs.

Example One:

"I didn't realize that I could begin reading to my daughter at such a young age," a mother said while her daughter played nearby. "When I had my baby shower," she continued, "I received lots of books. I put them away thinking that I would have to wait until she is older to read them to her."

— a mother at a home for single mothers attending a family literacy program

For the child whose mother understands with fresh insight the importance of books and reading to her daughter, life will be rich with the joy of discovery, the vital connection with a parent, and the fun of reading long before she begins school. The mother is not being tutored to read and write, but she is being encouraged to develop a positive attitude toward books and learning with her daughter.

Example Two:

"This particular area has a lot of light industry, factories, and older homes. Some people have lived here all their lives. Recently, developers are showing an interest in this area and the residents here are not pleased. We will be trying to set up an oral history project, which will involve learners and tutors going out into the community to interview residents and putting together a descriptive report of their findings."

— a literacy coordinator

In this example, literacy development has become linked to advocacy—understanding what the community is about so that people can recognize and appreciate what they are protecting. An oral history project

is a literacy program but also has the potential to be a vehicle for social change if the findings can be included in a report to the local planning council. Through these activities, people feel a sense of empowerment and can see the impact they have on their community.

Example Three:

"We've noticed a trend in the last couple of years that has taken us by surprise. More and more of our volunteers are coming from ethnic groups. This has been wonderful. However, there have been problems with communication. One fellow, for instance, was recently putting boxes that had just been delivered back on the truck. Often, too, the words we use at the hospital are not easily understood. What we need as part of volunteer training is a sensitivity to communication problems across cultures, and a presentation of commonly used terms and what they mean."

—a volunteer administrator at a North York hospital

The hospital example points out the need for a communication system that emphasizes plain language. The problem is not just the fact that the volunteers have difficulty with English, but also the fact that the communication system is poor.

Communication is a Two-Way Process

People who are acquiring new skills need a climate of sensitivity and openness, and the use of language that is clear. Here's a hypothetical example:

Picture a typical scene in a mechanic's garage. Sean is a successful accountant but knows little about cars. He has entrusted his car to his mechanic, Dave, who knows everything about cars, but little about how to communicate his knowledge. Here is the conversation when the mechanic explains what is wrong:

Dave (mechanic):

Looks like you've got weak breaker points. They're going to need adjusting to the gap they're supposed to be at.

Sean:

Uh, O.K. What about the engine rattle

Clear communication rests with both parties.

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I keep hearing?

Dave:

Oh, that could be a lot of things. I'm going to check the timing and the heat valve, but I suspect it's the condenser which may need replacing. If it's the distributer unit, wow, you really have problems.

Sean:

(a slight note of panic in his voice) Well, I suppose if you have to do all that, it's got to be done.

The point of the example is to help you experience, as much as you can, what a person who has difficulty reading and writing faces in circumstances where choices and decisions need to be made.

In the example, two obstacles prevented Sean and Dave from communicating. Sean found himself faced with the same obstacle that people who can't read and write face every day. In the example, Sean is comparable to a person who can perhaps read and write basic works, but often has trouble comprehending much of the material he sees every day. Like Sean, this person may feel inadequate, as if he *should* know more. The reasons Sean didn't ask the mechanic more questions (Can I see the worn condenser? How long will the old one last? Will it damage my car?) are similar to the obstacles to learning found in the illustration on page 18.

1. The mechanic knows what he is doing. If Sean asked too many questions it would look like he didn't trust Dave's knowledge and judgement. (Similar to a worker who doesn't understand why his dentist bill wasn't covered by insurance, but can't read the benefits booklet. He may not want to give the people in personnel the impression that he does not trust them by asking too many questions.)

2. The unfamiliar words were coming too fast for him to question. (Text often has unfamiliar words.)

3. Because Sean believed he was the only one in the service area who didn't know what the mechanic was saying, he chose not to assert himself and ask the questions he needed to ask in order to make an informed choice. (Most people know how to read and write; others will know you can't if you ask for clarification.)

Literacy Development Encourages:

- self-esteem
- confidence in personal change
- freedom; a sense of choice
- critical thinking
- greater ability to communicate clearly
- learning about the world
- knowledge about how to act and survive in the world

The other obstacle that prevented Dave and Sean from communicating was Dave's inability to communicate a message. What we are advocating in this guide is that communication is a shared responsibility and a two-way interactive process that people use to understand one another.

In the example, Sean could not understand the mechanic. However, the weakness in the link was not just Sean's lack of knowledge about cars, but also the mechanic's inability to deliver the message. In terms of reading and writing, this obstacle can be overcome by re-examining how we communicate to people. The use of jargon or difficult words can diminish the communication process. If a person's goal is functional literacy, the means to that goal will depend on that person's willingness to learn and also on the ability of the teaching source to communicate the necessary knowledge.

Programs That Teach More Than Reading and Writing

Literacy is enabling, illiteracy is disabling.

—Audrey Thomas

An ability to make informed choices, to

exercise independent thinking, and to obtain needed information to make decisions are all part of being fully literate. Among the many things that assist people in becoming participating members in our society, literacy development is a powerful one.

If a program is to be truly integrated, the context of the learning must be real life concerns and needs. Reading and writing development goes beyond one-to-one tutoring to decipher words. It should also provide people with ways to understand the world around them and how it affects them. The learning content needs to include both a structural level of learning, and a deeper, more critically meaningful one.

An integrated literacy program would analyze learning material in two ways: in the context of structural learning (semantics of language, grammar) and in the context of meaningful learning (analyzing content, meaning, dilemmas, solutions). The following sentences, then, would be analyzed in two ways:

"Add 1 litre of water to every 5 ml of solution. If this formula is not diluted according to instructions, your baby's health may be at risk."

Structural learning focuses on:	**Meaningful learning focuses on:**
• spelling	• an understanding of the problem
• punctuation	• its significance
• grammar	• a recognition of possible solutions
• sentence structure	

(adapted from Botkin, et al, 1979)

A learner, encouraged to exercise meaningful learning, reads the words and goes beyond the structural level of the sentence to compare the information to other things. A tutor could ask the learner:

1. Are there other potentially harmful things in a baby's world that you may not be aware of? (medication, toys, cribs, etc.) How can you find out about them?
2. What have you learned? Based on this new information, will you now be more likely to check all labels you come across? Will you tell other mothers about your experience?
3. What about your own health? Are there things you need to be aware of at your work or at home?

When reading and writing development goes beyond structural learning to include meaningful learning, or critical thinking, learners quickly achieve more autonomy and self-reliance.

Autonomy also involves the assertion of one's right to belong to the whole, and can increase a person's capacity to enter into wider human relationships, to cooperate for common purposes, to make linkages with others, to understand larger systems, and to see the whole of which one is part.

— No Limits To Learning: Bridging the Human Gap

When we think in terms of meaningful learning, questions move beyond "What does this sentence say?" or "How do I complete this form?" to "How do I become a successful participant in this workshop?" or "What will it mean for me if I can't find affordable housing?" Meaningful learning becomes an important and vital way of addressing inequalities that occur in society. The task of ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to learn becomes a social issue, part of the community's responsibility.

The Next Step

Approaches to integrated literacy programs should go beyond the direct one-to-one instruction of adults, to include others, such as parents, children, groups of people with common interests, and so on. There isn't a magic line a person crosses whereby suddenly they have passed between non-literate and literate. The process is gradual and continual. The possibilities for literacy development expand when you begin to see literacy as part of the means to an end, not an end in itself.

4

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A LITERACY INITIATIVE

PLANNING TO LEARN; LEARNING TO PLAN

Planning allows you to control what you're doing and to create an initiative within a fixed framework of time, money, staff resources, space, and so on. Organizing sets the process in motion by enlisting others to help and by setting priorities and parameters for the project.

To help you think about how to set up your own service within your agency, organization, volunteer group, or community, consider an existing model that provides literacy services, and extract the wisdom of years of experience from it. Community-based literacy programs have been established for over ten years now and have found, through trial and error, an effective system to teach reading, writing, and numeracy skills.

What is a Community-Based Literacy Program?

Examining the characteristics of community-based literacy programs can help you become aware of how the community can be used, how the acquisition of new skills can help people become more confident, and how shared involvement of volunteers, learners, and organizers can make your initiative come alive.

A good way to understand what community-based literacy programs are all about is to examine the word *community* as they see it.

Community means:

- a geographic location
- a set of common values
- shared involvement

Setting Boundaries

Geographic location refers to both where the community is situated and its boundaries. Often, in order to preserve its identity and mandate to serve a specific population, a community-based program will exercise strict boundaries from which it will draw not only its learners, but also tutors, staff, board members, and resources. Your service or program may have similar boundaries. Once you have established the boundaries, you will be able to anticipate your program's needs and project whether you can meet those needs.

A community-based literacy program actively promotes community involvement in whatever way is appropriate. The community can share in the responsibility for providing literacy development to local adults by offering resources to the program. For example, a local library may offer space to the program, the local press will contribute to the publishing of learners' stories and poems, a local board of education may provide funding, a local campus may help to recruit tutors.

Establishing Values

Often, a set of common values are shared by those who are involved in the program. Values translate into operating philosophies, such as ideas about how adults learn best, what people need in order to learn, the place that empowerment has in literacy work, and the role that society plays in assisting literacy skills development.

Clear articulation of your program's values can help you make difficult decisions. For example, one of your values may be that all people should be given an equal opportunity to learn. When a person you've just trained balks when you suggest they work with someone who has a physical disability, you

need to go back to your values and use them as a basis for a decision. Is this person upholding your program's values? Is he or she appropriate for your program?

You are responsible for the quality control of your program, and the people you want to help need to be provided with supportive experiences. A person who contravenes your program's values can harm not only the person with whom he or she is working but the entire operation as well.

When it becomes necessary to remove a person from the organization under these circumstances, a current list of volunteer agencies (literacy as well as others) will assist in helping you to redirect the person to a suitable agency.

They may want to know why they are being let go, and at that point you must tell them. You should always be prepared to defend your program's values.

When you are planning to add a literacy component to an existing facility, think about your current values by asking: what's important to us in our work, in the way we relate to each other, the people who use our services, the way that decisions are made?

Begin to examine what literacy means to you and the people who use your services. Will the people involved benefit from one-to-one tutoring? Do you feel a family literacy initiative, which would encourage parents and children in your community to read together, could become part of your current programming? Perhaps you see literacy development as a group of volunteers you coordinate to read to older adults at a seniors' care facility. Whatever your ideas, they need to be congruent with the rest of your organization's values.

Next, you need to communicate program values to your volunteers.

Some suggestions for how to do this include:

- Have a video or slide show depicting learners and tutors discussing what the program means to them. Then ask your volunteer group what they think the program stands for, based on what they have just seen. The ensuing discussion will drive home your philosophy.
- Ask active program participants to come and talk to the group. Tutoring, family literacy, peer learning — it really doesn't matter what form your program has taken, the people in your program will speak for you.

Shared Involvement

The third characteristic of a community is shared involvement. This means members learn together and actively participate in the life of the program. People will often meet in groups, allowing for the program to be used as both a social outlet, as well as a place for learning. Among other things, a community-based literacy program's strength comes from the feelings shared among participants. Feelings of commitment and involvement are generated by a structure that enables all members, if they choose, to involve themselves in the day-to-day activities, decisions, and long-term goals of the program.

The line between learners and tutors often blurs in community-based programs because learners are encouraged to become volunteers in their own program. Since involvement is so high, people share feelings of frustration when funding efforts fail. They share in each other's small triumphs, stories of overcoming difficulty, and feelings of loss when people move on. For people with reading and writing difficulties, getting involved in the program is part of their learning and helps to boost self-confidence. Extra hands are also useful when staffing and funding never seem to be enough.

Go to the People.
Live with them,
learn from them,
love them.
Start with what they know,
Build with what they have.
But with the best leaders
When the work is done,
The task accomplished,
The people will say,
"We have done this ourselves."

— Lao Tsu, 700 B.C.

Evaluation

Much of the success of community-based programs is linked to their constant self-evaluation and self-criticism of philosophy, methods, and activities. Again, the focus is on shared involvement; ideas come from both volunteers and program participants. Program organizers look to other programs as a source of new ideas and potential improvements. Committed staff, volunteers, and learners provide a constant supply of ideas for improving the program.

"We are constantly asking ourselves and each other whether what we're doing is working. If it is, we ask, "Why is it working?" and "How can we use that knowledge elsewhere?"

— a literacy coordinator

A committee to explore potential initiatives can be set up to include people from all parts of your organization. They can brainstorm ideas, recruit participants, and so on. To integrate learning initiatives into existing resources, it is important to involve people from all areas so that every idea or approach is then diffused throughout the organization. In this way, literacy skills development becomes linked to other activities and is not necessarily seen as a separate thing.

ORGANIZING

Organizing is not a mysterious process. Like many things, it involves skills that can be learned and developed. Moreover, you probably have many of the skills necessary for effective organizing. In the past, you may have planned a get together with friends, your child's birthday party, a school fundraising event, a street garage sale, or a local fair. We plan and organize all the time. We learn by trying out our ideas, watching what happens, thinking about what went well and not so well, and why, and then changing our actions so that next time success is more

Organizing is like detective work.

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likely. This is the basic process of all learning.

Organizing is like detective work. You try to find out how you or your group's idea will be received, who can benefit, why it has not been tried before, and if it has been tried, what happened. As you learn more, you become a vital advocate. More importantly, as you organize, you get people involved in the planning process, an important factor in the eventual success of your initiative.

General Steps In The Organizing Process

1. The "gap", (a shortcoming, absence in the system) is identified.
2. Someone, something, or some group will benefit if the gap is filled.
3. At this point, as far as you know, nothing is being done to fill the gap. You find out if your understanding is correct.
4. You think that your interest and enthusiasm can help to change the situation. You may also feel you have some knowledge in the area, and you are willing to learn more.
5. You speak with others who may be affected by the gap, and you find out if they would be willing to support your efforts.
6. Depending on the situation, you may visit key professionals, other community groups, academics, and any other people who are able to provide insights and information. You can make a checklist of community resources, noting the contact person, what the service or agency provides, and its possible linkage to your program or idea.

The Importance of a Needs Assessment

When you have completed the detective work, you conducted what's called a *needs assessment*. A needs assessment is either the formal or informal collection of data, which tells you who you think will benefit from your program, their educational needs, and any other factors that are relevant to the success of your initiative.

It is important to find out what needs your participants have. There is one effective way to find out—ask them and others involved. Speak with people at all levels of participation so that you receive many different perspectives. Both volunteers and the people who use your program, service, or facilities will welcome the chance to be included in a new initiative, paving the way for greater involvement as the program gets started.

A needs assessment of your community or organization will provide you with information about the age of the people who use your facility, where they live, their ethnic background, income level, any specific needs they may have, and whatever else you feel is important to know.

After you have gathered this information, you will be ready to begin speaking with individuals. Two approaches can be used: one-to-one interviewing or a focus group. Which one you use will depend on your situation. Where people may feel intimidated, one-to-one interviewing may be best. A focus group brings different people in the community or organization together (organizers, volunteers, participants) and issues are brought out and their relevance assessed. The information gathered is used to plan the integrated learning initiative. For both approaches, ask questions that focus on the extent to which reading and writing is used in everyday activities; whether people are having difficulty reading your program literature; and whether they, or anyone they know, would be interested in learning more skills for reading and writing.

By asking these questions you are beginning to involve people. By involving people in the planning phase, you are giving them ownership of the idea. A fully integrated program is characterized by a group effort in the coordination, planning, and creation of the program. Everyone who is interested can be involved. If you can point to a "literacy room" where "literacy stuff" goes on, or to one person who does the "literacy part of our program," then the program is not fully integrated into everyone's day-to-day activities and thinking, and not integrated

Interviews help you plan the learning initiative.

into your existing organization.

There are several good reasons for conducting a needs assessment:

- When you know specifically where the need is, you know where to focus your efforts.
- The recognition of needs helps to articulate objectives and evaluate the program.
- Participation in the planning stages by people in your organization will encourage a favourable attitude to your program; inclusion invites success.
- Data that outlines the need in your organization will be useful when you seek funding and administrative support.

Establishing Objectives

Setting objectives helps to focus your activities and provide a basis to refer to when your program encounters new challenges and decisions. Objectives guide you, but can be changed as your program develops. To know where you are going, you need to know the purpose of your program, what participants will get out of the program, and what the expected results are for your organization and the volunteers.

Your program should have its own definition of what literacy and other learning initiatives mean to you. You may view literacy as storytelling, deciphering government forms, one-to-one tutoring, and so on. You may also want your initiative to deal with banking tips, income tax, the process for filing complaints to government agencies. The definition you use should reflect your existing organization or service and the needs of those in your group. The purpose of your initiative needs to be realistic and specific. A poor description of objectives would be:

"The purpose of this program is to help people improve their literacy skills." A better example is:

"XYZ Centre, a home for young offenders, provides literacy development as part of its life skills program, recreational activities, and parenting program. The approaches used are one-to-one tutoring, group learning, reading for pleasure, and providing information on reading to children."

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Your list of objectives should include *learner outcomes*, that is, what you want participants to achieve through the program. Part of this will come from your overall needs assessment. Since you are integrating your program into an existing organization, you will already know what benefits participants gain from the organization; now you need to consider how your integrated program can support and supplement these benefits. Examples of learner outcomes are:

- Through an integrated approach to developing creative writing skills, this program intends to provide participants with experiences and opportunities that will facilitate their personal growth, encourage self-confidence, and convince participants of the importance of personal experiences.
- As a result of this program, parents will understand the importance of reading to their children, and the children will enjoy the closeness and attention they receive from their parents during the reading sessions.

Your objectives can also include a description of the volunteers' role:

- As a result of this program, our volunteers will be able to provide one-to-one tutoring to clients during the time they spend at our facility.

As well as a statement of results you want the community to experience:

- This program intends to raise public awareness at the local, business and municipal levels of the needs of people in our community who experience difficulties with reading printed material.

EXPERIENCES IN INTEGRATION

An understanding of how community based literacy programs have approached literacy building can lead to an integrated program that incorporates much of the wisdom and experience from these programs. The early stages of your venture are important. Here is an example of an integrated learning program. As you read it, make a mental note of what elements were successful in the program and what you would do differently.

ABC Centre is located in Toronto and is a home and care facility for young pregnant women and mothers. Many extra-curricular programs are available to those at the centre and to the community. Programs include dinner and social evenings, life skills training, employment programs, and recreational activities.

Partners In Learning, a program created to produce educational materials for organizers interested in adding literacy to existing services, helped to initiate a joint partnership with the centre whereby literacy skills development would be introduced and eventually integrated into their programming. With the help of a volunteer, a series of three one-hour informal workshops were run for young mothers and their babies. The workshops were aimed at teaching the mothers the importance of reading to their children at an early age, and the bond that language, song, and closeness can create between parent and child.

Before the first workshop, flyers announcing the program were distributed inside the centre. The heading was *Books for Babies* and said "Come learn about reading to your children at an informal get together." There was no mention of literacy.

At the first session the room was filled, but the air was thick with tension; no one spoke, the mothers looked uncomfortable. The facilitators proceeded anyway, by asking questions such as, "Do you remember being read to as a child? What did you like about it?" and writing down responses on a flip chart for all to see. By the end of the session the air had cleared. When they left the session, the facilitators noticed a chalkboard message that read: "Reading program today, mandatory attendance for all mothers." No wonder there were so many participants! After speaking with the coordinator, the facilitators were assured that the following two sessions would not be mandatory, yet all the mothers were present. During the course of the program three mothers came forward who wanted help with their reading and writing skills.

A reading group at a women's drop-in centre.

This example points out several important things to be aware of as an organizer of literacy-related events. To learn effectively and enjoyably, people need to participate voluntarily. What if no one shows up? Do all that you can to tempt them:

- Ask people if they would be interested in attending a session and find out what time is good for them.
- Find out what interests people, what they need.
- Offer something: snacks, buttons, books, coupons, or a small token that highlights the event.
- Get people to sign up and leave their phone number. That way they will feel they're committed. If they have said they'll come and don't show, ask a volunteer to call each one back saying, "We really missed you last night." This makes them feel important to the group.

The example also shows ways to allow people who may have difficulty reading and writing to come forward and participate in a non-threatening event. A stigma is a mark that sets someone apart from the rest. Both the words "literacy" and "illiteracy" carry such a mark. Just as language and thought can be used to integrate, they can be used to separate. People may shy away from workshops that use the word literacy. Name your event or activity in a way that broadens the meaning of literacy. Programs like *People, Words, and Change, Independent Studies, Neighbourhood Language Project, East York Learning Experience, Learning in the Workplace, Beat the Street*, bring to mind notions of communication, relationship, empowerment and equality, while avoiding the word literacy.

A facilitator at a life/work skills program at Fanshawe College shares how she helps those in the group who have difficulty reading and writing, without calling attention to them or treating them differently:

- Leave them alone until they feel comfortable volunteering to read.
- Use flipcharts to list simple words; always avoid jargon.
- Encourage people to "buddy up" and help each other.

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- For small group work where participants in the workshop write their own ideas out, allow people who have difficulty reading and writing to use tape recorders. When the information is presented to the large group, the taped message can be written down by the facilitator in simple language.

- Simplify theories and models by removing the idiom, but retaining the meaning.

An integrated approach to literacy reflects the needs of those who participate. Since needs and circumstances change over time, it is not surprising when an activity naturally flows into another related activity. An experience at Common Ground, a women's drop-in centre, illustrates this evolutionary process.

A series of informal workshops were set up to encourage mothers to read to their children within their daily lives. The first of several sessions was well attended by a small group of core people with their children. As the weather outside got warmer, however, people started coming sporadically and participation began dropping. The time was changed to link it with a lunch program where a meal was prepared and shared. Since there were fewer children present, and only a few of the core mothers left, the group collectively decided to drop the parent/child reading time and become a mothers' reading group. After lunch the mothers read to each other, passing the book from hand to hand as they tire, (not all read, some just listen), and the session lasts from an hour to an hour-and-a-half.

Another example of approaching literacy development from the context of the participants is a group of homeless people who, through a workshop, began to feel that their predicament was not made very clear to the public by the media. They decided to write their story about what it's like to be homeless, and presented the article to a local newspaper. During the process, they learned about writing and research (structural learning). They also came to a better understanding of the context in which they live, a shared perception among themselves, which helped them deal with their feelings of anger and resentment, and how they could gain some control over their lives by advocating on their own behalf (meaningful learning).

Your literacy initiative doesn't have to be a massive effort or make a "big splash." Moreover, you don't need to do it alone. Involve people; ask for help from both within your organization and from the literacy programs that exist in your community. You may be surprised at the resources and assistance that are available. To plan and organize a literacy initiative as an integral component of your organization, agency, service, and so on, you require some basic knowledge and a lot of common sense.

The Next Step

Although the initial stages of this initiative (learning about the issue, rationalizing integration, introducing the concepts to colleagues) may be completed by one individual, from here on a group effort must begin. Enthusiasm is contagious; the more eager you are to make this concept of integration a reality, the more successful you will be in recruiting volunteers and participants.

5 GENERATING INVOLVEMENT

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Recruitment is USER oriented. For an offering to be worthwhile to others, it must be perceived as valuable by them. Only then will it motivate positively.

— Sue Vineyard

When the groundwork of an integrated learning program is complete—the topic has been researched, the need for integration established, the policies and philosophy chosen—the next stage is to get people involved: to recruit.

This is the point where the project is about to be launched. It can be a very interesting and satisfying experience if the preparation has been thoughtful and systematic. Essential to this process of recruitment is the recruiter's ability to "market" the idea of integrating literacy within his or her organization's services. To do this well, the recruiter has to have a clear idea of the aims and goals of such an initiative, and be able to explain why integrated learning is of such importance in the organization's services. He or she will have to pitch the idea to the constituents within the organization.

If the recruiter is able to sell the idea to superiors, colleagues, and service consumers, a major step forward will have been taken in the recruitment campaign, by involving them at the very inception of the grand scheme.

Before proceeding any further, perhaps it would be useful to look at some of the characteristics that make a good recruiter. In general, a good recruiter is someone who:

- thinks clearly and is well organized
- has boundless enthusiasm
- is able to use common sense in dealing with problems
- has researched the topic of literacy
- has good communication skills and enjoys working with people
- has excellent networking skills to draw support and resources for the literacy project
- is persistent and can work through the problems that occur with any new venture
- has a good sense of humour.

Even if your recruiter, whether it is you or someone else, does not possess all the above traits, don't be discouraged. People learn through experience. Besides, you will get a little help from your friends in the steering committee.

The Literacy Steering Committee

The purpose of a literacy steering committee is to oversee the functioning of the project, including the task of recruitment. It should be organized early, and be composed of representatives of all the potential participants within your organization. Such a committee will generate more ideas and enthusiasm than just one person. More importantly, the ownership of the proposed literacy initiative can be shared among the participants of the steering committee. Shared ownership is one important way to ensure that the project is successful.

An example of a steering committee that was very successful was the one which launched the Book Show, which later became READ CANADA, Frontier College's children's literacy program. The steering committee for the Book Show included a children's book author, the owner of a children's book store, several children, and

The steering committee brings together people who represent different interests.

two members of the Frontier College staff. After three months of weekly meetings to brainstorm and plan, the Book Show was launched. The diversity of members on the steering committee ensured that a variety of groups, views, and values was represented and considered whenever a decision was made.

Do not be surprised if you are elected or even appointed chair of the steering committee. Since you are the person who took the initiative to read this guide, you are, most likely, the best person for the job.

Choosing a Recruiter

Of the characteristics that describe a good recruiter, we will focus on the first four since these are the ones that will help you get started in your endeavour.

1. Thinking clearly and being well organized are crucial to the recruitment process. If you are going to convince potential participants, whether they are volunteer tutors or learners, you have to be a clear thinker. Since organizing a literacy program takes time, it is important to be organized and to use your time efficiently. After all, you already have a full-time job to do.

2. Nothing can take the place of enthusiasm. An enthusiastic person can motivate and energize others. This is precisely what you meant to do when setting out to make literacy a part of your organization's services.

3. It may be stating the obvious, but it still bears mentioning that when you establish a literacy component in your organization, common sense is essential. More than a few literacy programs have used leaflets to recruit participants, which read something like: "If you have trouble reading and writing, call this number or come and see us at this address." Clearly, if the people they are addressing have trouble reading, they will not be able to decipher the leaflet. In such cases, another method of recruiting is needed, such as placing a community message on the radio. Most of the small problems that come up when trying to integrate literacy into a service can be solved by using common sense.

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4. It is important to be knowledgeable about literacy and its social implications if you are to be a good recruiter. Read up on the subject and think about how it applies to your organization. Having read the previous sections in this book, you are already more knowledgeable about literacy than the average Canadian.

When you have appointed (or self-appointed) an appropriate recruiter, you will be ready to act. But, before going too far, it is important to think again about the context within which you want to act. For the sake of brevity, let's call this context a *community*.

Your Community

This community can be a union, a church group, a prison, a Native Friendship Centre, an ethnic or multicultural organization, a women's shelter, a community drop-in centre, Big Brothers or Big Sisters, an advocacy group for disabled persons, a storefront organization for the homeless, a collective, or a coalition. In fact, it can be almost any place where you are working with people, providing them with some sort of service. Each community has its own culture — its own organizational structure, mandate, resources, and ways of thinking, acting, and being. It is important for the recruiter to understand thoroughly the culture of his or her community.

As a member of your community, you can take the lead in conducting a needs assessment. The needs assessment (which was discussed in section three) is an indispensable part of the recruiting process. Not only can it be used to ascertain what type of learning initiatives are needed in your community, it can also be used to find out who your immediate allies are, those you can call upon to assist the steering committee in implementing the ideas.

Your allies should include your professional co-workers, the people who work with you and, like you, can see the necessity of incorporating learning strategies into service delivery. These people may make up the bulk of your volunteer facilitators at the initial stages of the project.

The people in your community who have difficulty reading and writing and who will be potential participants in your integrated services are also your allies. These allies are key because without their support, the plan will not be successful. Finally, it is important that the director of your community understands the need for integrating learning initiatives into the community's current services. The support of this person can set a positive tone as you embark on this plan. The director's involvement and support should also motivate others to become involved. It is also a good idea to gain the support of the board of your community, if you have one. It can be a source of moral and material support.

The next important step will be recruiting your volunteers. It is best to enlist and train a group of volunteer tutors before gathering learners. However, once the tutors are trained, they should be working with the learners as soon as possible. Otherwise, they will lose motivation. The training of volunteer tutors is dealt with in some detail in section six.

Recruiting Volunteer Tutors

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.

— Ernest Shackleton, explorer

Unlike Shackleton's task, your task of recruiting will be easier because you are already working within a specific, familiar community, and success for a well-organized, motivated recruiter is almost guaranteed. However, like him, you will need to be bold and creative in your approach to recruiting.

The best way to start is to recruit a few potential volunteer tutors from among your co-workers. If you have done a reasonably good job marketing the idea, you should have no trouble finding several potential volunteer tutors from among your colleagues. If your colleagues become volunteer tutors, you will reap two distinct

Recruiting can start with the people you work with.

advantages: one, they understand the culture of the community; and two, they are more likely to work hard to ensure that the initiative is successful.

For example, in Native Friendship Centres, organizers of *reading circles* recruit volunteer readers from among the other staff at the centre. Thus, as employees of the centre, they are motivated and feel a shared sense of responsibility for the success of the project.

Another example is the READ project in Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia. It was organized by staff of the Eastern Shore Development Commission, a rural development organization working with a population spread over three hundred kilometres. When it was discovered that many of those who used the commission's social services could not read or write, some members of the staff decided to organize the READ project to try and improve the level of literacy.

In these two examples, the initial recruiting of volunteers was done by word of mouth. This method, according to research, is the best way to find volunteers.

Some communities use a combination of methods for volunteer recruitment.

For example, the Prison Literacy initiative in Kingston, Ontario, which began in 1983, is a one-to-one tutoring project that serves approximately one hundred inmates from eight correctional institutions in the area. The project was developed within the prisons, with the cooperation and assistance of prison officials and inmates. Approximately forty percent of the volunteer tutors are inmates themselves. Inmate volunteers are recruited in a number of ways:

- referred by school authorities within each institution
- enlisted at the initial orientation for each new batch of inmates at each prison
- word of mouth
- posters displayed in each institution
- the inmate liaison appointed in each institution.

Sometimes, you will have to go outside your specific community to recruit volunteers. An example of this is the Literacy for

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Youth program of the YMCA in Edmonton, Alberta. The organizers of this program, which serves the needs of youth aged 16 to 24, used a variety of methods to recruit volunteer tutors. At least 75 percent of the volunteer tutors had to be under 25 years of age. Therefore:

- They inserted ads soliciting volunteers in various college and university newspapers in Edmonton. The response was overwhelming.
- They made several presentations to local high-school and college students.
- They used the services of the Volunteer Action Centre in the city.

By taking these steps, they were able to attract many potential volunteer tutors, the majority of whom met the age requirement. Other places to recruit volunteers include:

- local service clubs
- church memberships
- parent associations
- senior citizen's organizations.

The potential sources for volunteers are limitless. It is always a good idea to start out small, recruiting by word of mouth among your peers, before looking elsewhere. Remember, if you don't ask, people cannot say yes.

Recruiting Learners

Since you are already working within a particular community, and since this community is the focus of your integrated program, the recruiting task will be easier than if you had to go outside your community to find learners.

When you do your needs assessment, you will no doubt come across potential learners. When you do, discuss with them your plan to implement a literacy component into the services they already receive. By doing a good job of selling the idea, you will have won their approval and, quite possibly, recruited your first group of learners.

It is a good idea to hand-pick the initial group of learners to ensure control and success. A small group of six to eight students will make it easier to structure the program. It is also wise to choose the most enthusiastic and motivated people. This may seem cold and calculating, but control is important in the early stages of the initiative in order to ensure success. Once the structure and logistics of the program are in place, you can increase the number of participants.

By hand-picking the first students, you will have better odds for success. Success is vital during the initial steps of the program and will make the program easier to market. Satisfied volunteers will bring in other volunteers; similarly, satisfied learners will help recruit other learners.

For example, the Independent Studies program of Frontier College began with six learners a decade ago. Six carefully trained volunteer tutors were paired with these six learners in the initial program. Success was almost guaranteed. Word got around and soon there was a waiting list for both learners and volunteer tutors. Today, there are about 100 active pairs of tutors and learners in the program.

Success will:

- generate more enthusiasm from the volunteer tutors
- generate more interest from potential learners in the community
- help incorporate literacy into the culture of the community
- impress everyone from the executive director to the consumers.

A successful literacy program, whether community based or integrated within some sort of service, will sell itself, ultimately generating more participation and support from all parties within your community.

MAINTAINING THE MORALE OF THE GROUP

Organizers of successful literacy initiatives have to be concerned with maintaining the morale of both tutors and learners.

Morale will be high if the various needs of both groups of participants are being met. Therefore, understanding the motivation and needs of participants, and meeting these needs, is crucial to the success of your work.

Motivation and Needs

Volunteer tutors from within your community will join the project for a number of reasons:

- They see the importance of reading and writing skills as they relate to the needs of the consumers in the community.
- They have some time to spare and would like to make a worthwhile contribution to society.
- They have a need to work with people in a creative way.
- They want to learn new skills.
- They would like some recognition from the community.
- They feel volunteering will help them in their professional careers.
- They want to be with their friends and perhaps make new friends.
- They like you personally and would like to help.

Similarly, learners within the community will enrol in an integrated literacy initiative for their own reasons:

- They like the concept of an integrated program.
- They feel compelled to participate.
- They want to feel a stronger sense of belonging to the community.
- They want to build up their self-esteem.
- Their friends are participating and they want to be with their friends.
- They want to fill their time in some constructive way.
- They would like to get a job or a promotion.
- They want to become a better reader.
- They want to fulfill a New Year's resolution.
- They were persuaded by your marketing pitch.

If you understand the needs of each learner, and meet these needs, you will encourage others to enrol as well, thus making the integrated program productive, worthwhile, and successful.

Ownership

Recruitment of volunteers and, more importantly, learners, will be much easier if both groups of people feel a sense of ownership toward the literacy initiative. This is particularly true of the learners. It is, after all, for them that the literacy initiative is organized in the first place.

Clearly, if the learners in your community feel a keen sense of ownership toward the initiative, they are more likely to put greater effort into realizing its success. If they do not take ownership, the program will be mediocre at best.

The other members of your community, whether they are directly involved or not, should also feel a sense of ownership toward the project. This is significant because their support and efforts are also important to the success of the project. For instance, a director who sees the value of improving the reading, writing, and numeracy skills of people within his or her community is more likely to create a positive atmosphere for success than one who does not.

The steering committee you organized in the conceptual stages of this initiative can

now be seen as an inspired idea. The steering committee was the first stage at which the various constituents of the community took control of "their" project. Ownership has to be encouraged and fostered so that a positive attitude prevails in the community with regard to this initiative.

Participant Appreciation

If the participants, both volunteers and learners, within an initiative feel appreciated, motivation and interest will remain high. In fact, one of the main reasons participants drop out of a program is that they do not feel appreciated.

Thus, it is not surprising that all volunteer-based groups organize some form of volunteer appreciation event to acknowledge the participation and contribution of their volunteers.

Within the context of your community, there should be some form of event to acknowledge the involvement of both volunteers and learners.

Such events will help to keep morale high. The goodwill generated on such occasions can often act as a catalyst in generating interest and in drawing more participants into the program. The events tell volunteers, learners, and other participants that they are valued.

It is a relatively simple matter to organize "participant appreciation" events.

The steering committee should set a date and get:

- a room
- decorations; maybe a banner
- food and drink
- music
- a guest speaker such as a local writer
- buttons, pins, certificates, or some other token of appreciation.

That's it. Keep it simple.

As an example, about two years ago, the Beat the Street program in downtown Toronto organized a major event to celebrate the successes of students and tutors. The Beat the Street program encourages street youths to help each other improve their

Appreciation events are vital to the life of the initiative.

reading and writing skills. The event itself took place at the Beat the Street Centre on Gerrard Street on a Saturday afternoon.

Long before the event actually began, participants began to filter in. Most were dressed in their best clothes. Learners who normally wore blue jeans and a T-shirt appeared in suits and dresses.

The early birds helped to organize the refreshments and put up decorations. These decorations included examples of learners' work, which were pinned up on the walls, along with streamers, balloons, and paper hats. Everyone was in a festive mood. The celebration was officially kicked off by the mayor of Toronto, who said a few words about literacy and the importance of the Beat the Street program. He also handed out certificates to those who had successfully completed their course of studies. Speeches were made by the students. The event was very emotional. It takes incredible courage to enrol in such a program and see it through to completion. After that came music, dancing, and food. The celebrations went on until the early hours of the morning. These events should be organized two, three, or four times a year. They are critical to the success of the literacy initiative you are organizing.

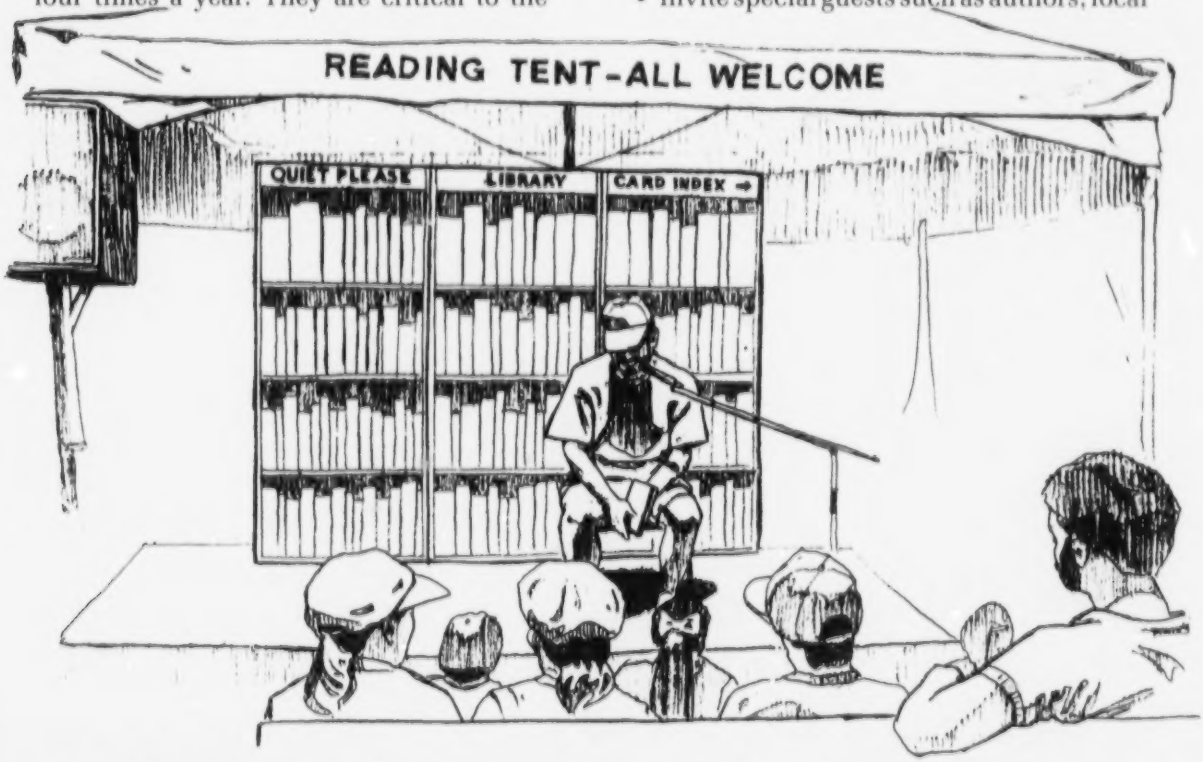
Celebrating Success

It is important to celebrate success. Beyond the participant appreciation events, there are other ways to celebrate success in literacy:

- Publish learner's writings in a book or newsletter. For example, the READ project in Musquodoboit Harbour produced a newsletter called *Readmore* which was filled with students' writing and sketches. It was a fine way to show appreciation for the efforts of the learners.

- Organize a *reading tent* at a local event. For example, in your community, events such as the Fall Fair, Canada Day, Hallowe'en, Potato Festival or a Folk Festival can provide opportunities for your own community to organize a reading tent. All that is needed is a tent or some other type of shelter, a few blankets, books, and participants. You can profile learners' work. Invite the local press.

- Invite special guests such as authors, local



Reading tents at community events draw young and old alike.

heroes, or politicians to come to your community and celebrate the importance of words and literacy.

These are some of the ways in which to maintain the interest and morale of the recruits. Be creative.

In this section, a few ideas have been presented to assist you in recruiting volunteers, learners, and participants. Naturally, you will have ideas of your own. The task of recruiting may seem daunting, but with planning, thought, and organization, it can be done successfully. There is an old Chinese proverb: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

The Next Step

Once you've generated involvement and enthusiasm, your volunteers will need some direction to get started. The organization, community, or group you belong to presents many opportunities for learning activities. Knowing where to look and what to look for are the keys to success.

6

CREATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

HOW DO WE LEARN?

As children, many of us were taught to read and write using an approach that began from the bottom up. That is, for the most part, we were first shown the symbols and sounds that made up our language. As we progressed, we started to work with words and sentences. Gradually we began to read. Like tight-rope walkers who did not look past their own feet, we approached the words one at a time.

Think about the word *surprise*. What comes to mind—birthday parties, paper hats, coloured balloons, a flat tire on Monday morning? Now think about the letters that make up the word. S-U-R-P-R-I-S-E. What comes to mind now? Not much, likely. It is not the individual letters that make a word meaningful, but rather the experience and context that the reader brings to the text.

In fact, we learn to read in much the same way that we learn to speak. What we hear or see gradually increases in meaning as our understanding of the language grows. We use context clues found in the structure and organization of the language to create meaning. Take for example the following sentence:

The frazzlesnog diggered a twiddle for gru.

What did the frazzlesnog do?

Why did the frazzlesnog digger a twiddle?

We are able to answer questions about this sentence even though we can only be sure of the words *the*, *a*, and *for*. This is because, as readers, we understand the structure of the sentence provided by these context clues. They provide us with grammatical information so we know that *frazzlesnog* is a noun, *digger* is a verb, and so on. Many adults who are learning to read are not aware of the importance of, or their ability to recognize, context clues. They believe that learning to read is about sounding out words. Reading skills develop more rapidly when learners move beyond this view. For this reason, the way in which an adult reader sees the activity of learning to read should be taken into consideration when co-designing their learning with them.

We don't have any people who don't read at all. People don't read enough and they feel that you know more than they do. The idea is to make them confident enough in themselves to display what they know and make them feel like part of the team.

- a literacy tutor

Looking at the Small Pieces First

Basically, there are three approaches used to help adults learn to read. The first two are like those approaches we experienced as children, methods that start from the bottom. *Phonics* and *word recognition* assume that reading comprehension is built slowly, by looking first at the smallest pieces, letters and sounds, and slowly progressing to words, and so on. In both, reading is defined as "naming words." (Brooks, 1976)

Phonics takes words and breaks them into letters and sounds. Students either learn the individual sounds of each letter first and then put them together, or they learn several words that begin with the same letter and then determine which sound each word has in common. (Askov, 1989)

Word recognition builds lists of words and requires that the learner memorize and learn to recognize them. Sight-word lists may be learned for several reasons. They can be used to introduce new readers to words like *where*, *when*, *what*, *the*, *a*, and so on, or to teach word patterns such as *make*, *cake*, *bake*, so that learners know the first word of the series and then build on their knowledge to read and learn the others. Sight-word lists

can also be used to teach words with irregular spellings. (Colvin and Root, 1987)

Both of these methods rely on the conditioning aspect of learning, that is, learning through repetition. They both stress recognition of letters, words, and sounds. Words are then put together to create meaning. Approaches to increasing reading skills that begin from the bottom put the onus on the tutor to pass on skills to the learner. Tutors using these methods take on greater responsibility in choosing materials and building curriculum. (French, 1987) Many non-reading adults may have had difficulty with word recognition and phonics techniques when they were children. Using these techniques a second time may bring back the negative feelings and memories that characterized the first encounter. These techniques often confront the new reader with what they don't know instead of building on and valuing what they already know.

We go on field trips and then we work on grouping the activities into sentences. People become aware of their comprehension needs while we're working on stories together.

—a literacy tutor

Beginning with Meaning

The third method that is used to teach adults how to read is to have the learner dictate his or her ideas to the tutor while the tutor writes them down. The written passage becomes a source of words that can be used to practise reading, writing, and spelling, or as a basis for further discussion. This approach is called *language experience.*

One opportunity to use language experience began when a learner told her tutor that she would no longer be able to meet her in the evenings because her brother now had a night job and wasn't available to drive her. The tutor suggested they work on a story using the learner's situation. Once they had written the text, the tutor read it out loud. The learner wanted to talk about how they could continue their sessions and so, together, they listed all the ways in which she could travel. In this way, the learner not only got the chance to tell her own story (a rare occurrence for many people), but was also given the opportunity to improve the situation by discussing other ways of getting to the sessions. The learner also decided that she would learn how to use the bus. From the dilemma, then, the learner acquired

Language experience stories are valuable aides to learning.

several new words for her reading vocabulary.

Language experience can be based on the reactions or thoughts readers bring to a piece of text (Rigg, 1981) The ideas in the stories also assist the learner in becoming more aware of a situation. At Street Haven, a hostel and drop-in centre for homeless and marginally housed women, they are encouraged to use their stories to discuss common experiences of homelessness. This helps to reduce their sense of isolation.

As children, we first learn to speak the words that have the most meaning to us. The language experience method is based on the theory that we learn to read in the same way. It is an approach that gives the learner the opportunity to say "I already know that." From there, tutor and learner decide how to build on that knowledge. It stresses thinking over memorization. By encouraging the new readers to voice their own text, this method gives them more responsibility and adds additional value to their experience. The learners are more active in the learning process because they have a large role to play in creating learning materials and choosing goals.

Many adult literacy programs combine all of the methods described above in an approach called *whole language*. They begin with what the students want to learn or learn about. Material for sessions comes from the learners' stories, or tutors and learners gather written materials such as newspaper articles, bank deposit and withdrawal slips, or other forms, depending on the learners' interests and needs. A variety of instructional techniques, including phonics and word recognition, are used to supplement learning. Automatic word recognition is very important to many adults who are learning to read because it helps to increase their self-confidence. Word recognition skills can be taught in a suitable context and as the need is identified by the tutor or learner.

FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS FOR LEARNING

Many of us learned to read in classrooms. This structure, when used alone, is not generally successful in teaching adults to read, for a number of reasons. One of the most obvious is that people who are learning to read as adults have had difficulty as youngsters learning in these environments. Perhaps they had a hearing or sight disability that went undetected, perhaps they were too hungry to concentrate, or too disturbed by their life at home. Classroom situations do not work for everybody because these situations favour the kind of learner who does not need a great deal of individual attention. It also favours those who have the ability and confidence to apply their lessons beyond the confines of the classroom. This is not to say that classrooms cannot be used but that their use should be supplemented by other approaches that can provide a greater degree of individualized instruction.

Tutoring

One of the most common ways of providing individual attention and encouraging people to take greater control in their lives is through the use of a tutoring model. Tutoring, whether in groups or on a one-to-one basis, meets the needs of adult learners in a number of ways. It places an emphasis on the learning relationship, the relationship between the tutor and learner(s) and, in small groups, between the learners themselves.

Through regular sessions with a committed and supportive tutor, adult learners have the opportunity to increase their reading and writing skills and, with time, adopt the kinds of behaviours required to be a good tutor to somebody else. Tutors are able to provide immediate feedback. The tutoring situation provides learners with an opportunity to start where they believe they need to start, to be the creators and planners of their own curriculum. It teaches them to set goals and to work at their own pace. If these skills are fostered, the motivation of the learner will naturally increase. This kind of learning environment is invaluable to many people who are trying to grow and make changes in their lives.

Tutoring can take place on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Although it varies,

depending on the cultural context in which you are working, one-to-one situations usually work best for those who are in the earliest stages of reading. One-to-one is also preferable where those people you wish to serve do not share common goals or interests or when privacy or low self-esteem are issues for them. Your ability to provide this kind of individualized service will be limited by the number of volunteers you have available. Where small groups and classrooms are being used, one-to-one tutoring can act as an additional support for learners.

Tutoring in Small Groups

Group situations are an alternative where isolation is seen as a negative factor. Small group tutoring (one tutor and two or three learners) is another way of providing individualized instruction. These situations work well when the individuals share common goals and when learners have enough confidence to work and learn with others. Small groups provide opportunities for learners to interact with others who, while they may have common learning goals, do not necessarily share the same beliefs and values. Small groups can create the kind of environment that encourages tolerance and acceptance of the values of others. The groups should be small enough to ensure that close contact between the tutor and individual learners remains possible. This is essential in order to ensure ongoing assessment and immediate feedback.

The relationships that exist in group tutoring (tutor-group, tutor-learner, learner-learner, and learner-group) all serve to promote the learning process. (Moore and Poppino, 1983) As the learners begin to set goals and work on projects together, the distinction between the tutor and the learners becomes blurred.

Peer Learning

Implicit in the tutoring model is the idea of peer learning. From the time we are very young, we learn from our peers in all kinds of situations. In reality most of us can remember times when we learned something from someone whom we saw as an equal. Not all experiences of peer learning are positive.

We were instructed to write letters in our notebooks in rows. One day a girl from another class came into our room with her notebook. She was asked by my teacher to show everyone her book and she walked up and down the rows of desks showing each one of us a page of her work. She had a gold star at the top of the page and, unlike mine, her letters ran in neat rows. I remember feeling ashamed of my work and thinking that her neat rows were not important. But for some reason or other, they made her smarter than me.

— a literacy worker

Others are positive

I once had a woman enrolled in one of my evening cooking classes who had difficulty reading the recipes I handed out each week. She was always very quiet and kept a low profile in her group but she seemed to enjoy what she did and she never missed a class. I was concerned that she rarely seemed to do any of the actual cooking, although she watched closely and did various preparation tasks like chopping vegetables and beating eggs. Rather than approach her about it, I continued to watch the group she was with. Together they worked on the recipes, everyone helping in their own way to prepare the food. After the last class, as we all said our goodbyes, she thanked me and said that she had enjoyed herself. She seemed to have had a good experience working together with the others and learning in her own way.

— a cooking instructor, Toronto Board of Education

People working together in low-pressure situations can relax, exchange knowledge, and learn in a way that is most comfortable for them. Peer-learning can be used effectively, when established and encouraged in a positive environment, to increase any type of skill. In the example above the student picked up some of the cooking skills she needed by watching the others in her group. Peer-learning opportunities are always pos-

Peer learning occurs in all kinds of situations.

sible, whether it be co-workers helping co-workers, seniors helping seniors, or mothers assisting other mothers. One of the main advantages of peer learning is that it can take place almost anywhere.

The concept of peers learning constructively from each other has been used in the Beat the Street programs in Toronto, Winnipeg, and Regina. These programs were designed to teach practical skills such as reading and writing to young people who live or make their living on the street, both as a means of helping them cope more effectively and providing them with some of the skills they would need to leave the street. Working in different cultural settings (the program in Winnipeg, for example, provides most of its services to the urban native community), Beat the Street programs are opportunities for young people who live on the street to tutor and learn from each other. Those who visit the centres can, through training and practice, become tutors or simply take advantage of the literacy services available.

Tutors do not have to be peers in the way we have described here. Often tutors are other people from the community. The Rent Review Hearings Board in Toronto is developing an in-house initiative in which tutors from the organization will be trained to work with both their co-workers and those who use the services of the board. Tutors function in an equal partnership with their learners and this includes situations in which they may not necessarily define themselves as peers.

Computers in Literacy

Most literacy programs eventually arrive at a point where the use of computers, educational software, desktop publishing, and computer networks is considered, and often debated. Computer technology can offer a great deal in aid of adult learning, but also has some pitfalls that one should consider.

Computers can certainly be motivating for a learner. People from all walks of life use computers. Those who are proficient on computer systems are admired by others, and this mystique rubs off, to some extent, on anyone who sits before a computer keyboard. Learners who think computer skills are worthwhile and appealing will be motivated by a literacy program that employs

computers. Good software programs can allow the student a good deal of control over their own learning and even the design of learning programs. The process is also more private, and good software programs have a gentle and supportive way of delivering feedback when errors are made.

Computers, once understood, can assist in editing written work, and can enable learners to produce printed copies of work that are clear and professional in appearance. This is especially helpful for learners whose abilities may not enable them to produce hand-written text.

Costs vary depending on the hardware used and software purchased. Integrated systems, sometimes using video or laser disks, are usually considerably more expensive and less flexible. Decisions on what to purchase and use will naturally start with a survey of recommended software. Computer hardware is an important consideration, but a secondary one. (See the software evaluation resources listed in the reference section of this guide.)

Anyone who has been a beginner on a computer system knows about that rollercoaster ride. Learning to use computers can either open new doors of opportunity or sink even the most educated among us to new depths of self-doubt. The risk of the latter, when applied to unassisted literacy learners whose self-confidence is often in need of support, is unacceptable. A coach, guide, or tutor is essential. Ultimately, computers can lessen the demands placed on tutors by allowing more efficient, independent study. They are not a replacement, however, for sensitive, well-trained tutors.

Setting Up

Questions to ask:

- What role do you want computers to play in your program? (It's usually better to think of programming as computer assisted, rather than computer based)
- How many computers will you have? How many can be used at once, given your staff situation? How will these considerations shape your programming?
- Do your learners have special needs that should be considered when choosing hardware and software? (e.g. screens and software that allow print to be magnified,

A computer does not replace a good tutor.

braille, touch-screen technology, etc.)

- Do you want to connect with other literacy organizations using computers, through telecommunication links? (see resource list in reference section for further details)

- What types of computers do you have? Most software is currently made for the Apple II series, the IBM compatibles, and the MacIntosh—not all software is interchangeable. Buying "clones" can certainly reduce costs, but often requires more independence and knowledge from staff when breakdowns occur. It's always wise to obtain a service contract at the time of purchase.

- What software do you intend to use? What cost factors are you faced with? Do your computers have the necessary disk drives, memory capacity, monitor type and graphics capability to run the software? Many public domain and shareware programs can be "downloaded" (copied from another data base) over telephone lines, or obtained inexpensively elsewhere. Bear in mind, though, that such programs are usually the most vulnerable to computer viruses, which have caused great havoc in recent years.

- Do you have a printer? Dot matrix printers with more than eight pins (the printing tools of the printer) are your best choice — they are economical, produce good letter-quality type, and can also be used for graphics. Is the printer easy to use and maintain for both staff and learners?

- Have you developed a plan for training volunteers in the use of your specific hardware and software?

- Have you thought of how to evaluate your centre's use of computers? Don't forget to take note of learners' attitudes in your evaluations.

- Have you planned to guide learners in acquiring "computer literacy," i.e. the specific knowledge/skills necessary to operate a computer? Many tutors observe ruefully that they spend more time discussing disks, keyboard instructions, and reassuring people that they really can't "break" a computer, than they do assisting the intended learning. All computer novices need to be shown quickly and clearly how to get computers turned on and working, how to ask the computer for help, proper use of disk drives, keyboard basics, how to save what they've written, and how to adjust the monitor. Plan to orient learners just as you would staff. (Jagger, 1990)

Software — The Heart of Any System

The software evaluation guides listed in the reference section will be a good source of information for you to consult. However, your own experience and intuition, and that of learners and colleagues, will soon be your best guide. The only sure rule about software for literacy is "buyer beware." Some programs claim to be literacy software but are not student-centred and intended for adults. Good software programs have a number of things in common:

- They ask for genuine interaction, not merely the filling in of blanks or pressing of one or two keys alternately.

- They suit the socio-economic, age, and cultural background of learners in areas such as idioms, role models, voice synthesis, and geography.

- They are simple to start up, and don't slow down progress with technology roadblocks along the way.

- They have authoring capabilities such that the learner can create his or her own materials, and use these as the template for the program activities (e.g. certain crossword programs).

- They parallel and complement tutoring activities that tutors and learners are using.

- They allow learners to control the pace of learning and the amount of reinforcement

- They are often in a tutorial format, increasing interaction between learner, tutor, and software. (Some word processing tutorials are particularly good in this regard.)
- They encourage learning and skill development in a wide range of areas: memory, math, budgeting, creative writing, group problem solving, computer-based skills such as word-processing and desktop publishing. (adapted from MTML, 1990)

Many software programs currently in existence for literacy learning are programs based on a specific course i.e. pre-packaged programs that place the goals of the program designer ahead of those of learners, requiring step-by-step completion of pre-determined tasks.

Some software that is not commonly promoted as learning software is really quite good—some word processing programs, games, and data-management programs. However, no program exists that can be used to replace the facilitator. Facilitators who are familiar with the program and the computer are essential, even though they may be needed only periodically.

Computer technology presents some marvellous opportunities for learning enhancement, and the future promises even brighter developments, as more and more programs provide authoring capabilities. Costs continue to decrease while computing power continues to grow with each new generation of machines. It is easily within the capability of a very small organization to investigate computer options and implement some type of computer-assisted programming. Your investigation may conclude that computers are inappropriate for your program. Computers are merely tools—albeit powerful ones—that complement but do not replace effective literacy programming.

Oral History

Do you think the porter and the cook have no anecdotes, no experiences, no wonders for you?...The walls of their minds are scrawled all over with facts, with thoughts. They shall one day bring a lantern and read the inscriptions.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Having grown up in a literacy-based culture, most of us have an ingrained bias against accounts of reality that are not recorded in the printed word. For many literacy learners, however, the printed word is not an accessible means to knowledge, and so memory, shared stories, conversation, and even folklore must take its place. For literacy workers in the community, these all present rich resources for learning, if fully appreciated.

We are naturally speakers, not writers.

— Eric Havelock

Many anthropologists and linguists will suggest that orality, not literacy, is really the core of our culture. Few, if any, will suggest that literacy operates without reference to orality. What this all points to is the need to remove our natural biases against oral culture, to accept fully the value of ideas and experiences not framed by paper.

Programs that focus on enhancing reading and writing skills can use learners' stories and experiences as reading material while, at the same time, providing a means for preserving and enhancing the oral culture. With the use of a tape recorder, stories can be recorded and transcribed.

Don't be surprised at the complexity of the written product. Oral culture partakes of all but the most abstract of written culture. On the other hand, oral history is often peppered with real anger and indignation over the life experiences of those marginalized by society. One needs to be attentive to the potential emotional and political undertones of even the most ordinary of anecdotes. There remain, though, many practical ways in which to use and support oral history in community literacy efforts and good reasons for doing so.

First of all, we all understand the need for a variety of activities in literacy work. Storytelling provides an excellent alternative to

One way to story-tell is quilt making.

traditional written work. Almost all of us have warm memories of being read to when we were children. There is a level of intimacy created, often from these same recollections, any time we are read to in later life. This can help bring down barriers and reduce the formality in literacy activities.

People involved with the Oral History program of the Literacy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education recently demonstrated a number of ways to incorporate storytelling into programs. These include:

- *Song writing.* With a little music instruction, individuals and groups can write and perform pieces based on their stories.
- *Puppetry.* Combining arts and crafts with literacy, puppet plays can be a creative way to act out stories.
- *Mural Painting.* Stories can expand to involve colours and symbols, and many can participate in the creation of the final product.
- *Quilt Making.* One suggestion was to have each person contribute a quilted square to depict his or her favourite story. The final quilt can then be "told" by all involved. This activity need not require quilting skills— the quilt can be made of drawings on paper or from scrap material pasted on a square.

There are a variety of things that can be done to record stories. Cassette tapes are always useful. If storytellers are shy, they can recount their tales to others, who can make the tapes for the group. Stories can be written on flip charts and then performed in parts by group members. Videotapes can also be employed, especially if the participants choose to act out stories.

It may be difficult to get stories from learners. There is nothing wrong with compiling bits of real life from many people to create a fictitious story. Also, learners with shared backgrounds may enjoy contributing to a large, familiar story in small parts. In other cases, a learner may simply want to tell a story to one person, who will transcribe it. Once transcribed, oral histories are open to a full range of potential learning activities.

One important final note: good storytelling requires good listening. Most of our listening skills have become rusty in modern life.

Good listening skills are necessary for both tutor and group participants. Good listening requires:

- respect for the speaker's right to speak
- a caring, supportive atmosphere
- appropriate responses (e.g. eye contact, questions, paraphrasing, "uh-huhs")
- concentration, absence of distractions.

It is important for the facilitator to create a suitable storytelling climate, by establishing with learners the framework for these potentially rewarding and intimate activities.

Family Literacy

Family literacy offers an approach to increasing learning skills in the context of the family. For most children, learning begins with the family unit. The Southam survey of 1987 examined some of the reasons that children grow up to be non-reading adults. Their findings indicated that non-reading adults usually do not remember being read to as children and they do not remember books and reading being a part of their upbringing. These findings reinforce the idea that an *intergenerational cycle* exists for basic skills; that is, if parents lack certain skills, such as reading or numeracy, they will be unable to pass these skills on to their children.

Family literacy programs encourage all types of learning processes in the home so that the intergenerational cycle will take on a new meaning: a cycle of learning. It is an approach that acknowledges that the parent, or prime care giver, is the child's first teacher. In many ways, the parent is also the child's best teacher.

When children first try to stand alone, parents wisely smile and praise their efforts. If the children start to fall, parents do not scold them for making mistakes...Parents also seem to realize that all children learn to walk in different ways and at different times.

— Joy Wilstead

Family literacy helps parents take the wisdom they use when helping their children learn those important early tasks of standing and walking, and apply it when teaching their children other important tasks such as reading.

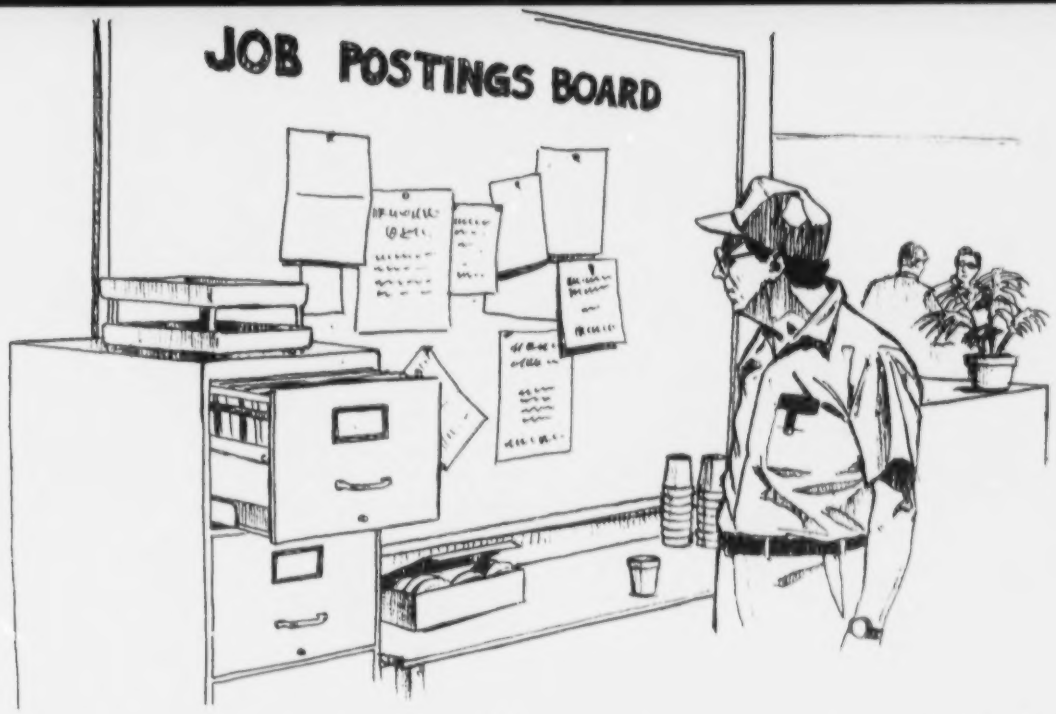
Family literacy programs are useful because they appeal to adults who would not otherwise consider taking part in a structured learning program. A recent company picnic at Esselte Pendaflex Canada Inc., a paper products manufacturing firm with about 400 employees, included a family reading tent. Although the company was currently running a workplace learning program, the tent attracted many people who were not participants in that program. Parents and children gathered to read together. Books and balloons were given away to children who visited the tent.

In designing program offerings for parent involvement, it is important to consider the amount and kinds of stress the parent is experiencing, the parent's development level, and the range and types of program activities that might meet the parent's needs.

— Elizabeth Landerholm, Jo Ann Carr

Family literacy programs can offer a variety of options to children and parents. If a child-care facility is set up, parents can leave their children in safe hands while they attend the adult learning programs. Other classes can be developed to teach parents how to work effectively with their children or to teach young adults child-care skills. Informal tutoring in the home is another option for reaching those who may not be able to go out to take part in programs. Home activities are also encouraged through the development of lending libraries.

Family literacy programs offer a wide variety of ways in which to get parents and children working together and on their own. Workshops on this topic use a combination of activities and techniques such as reading together, learning songs and games, watching demonstrations, practising tips for reading with children. Family groups work on



On your walk, look for things that can be used for learning.

making up their own stories and producing their own books. These written materials can be helpful to other child-care programs. In one corner of a room, adults work together on reading a book or telling stories, while in another corner, children learn a song; then they get together again to share and practise. Activities are linked to meaningful family patterns such as having a story at bedtime. Many programs attempt to get people involved in family literacy as soon as children are born.

Talk to your baby. Talk to your baby when you feed it, change it, give it a bath or dress it. Talk about anything. Just talk!

— Push Literacy Action Now (PLAN Inc.), Washington, D.C.

The Ottawa Board of Education's family literacy programs link youth and adult literacy activities by holding homework programs for teens while parents attend upgrading classes.

Family literacy activities contribute to the literacy skills of both adults and children. In addition, they improve the self-esteem of the parent and create an opportunity to increase communication skills within the family. (Thomas, 1990)

Reading Circles

Reading circles are becoming a popular way to get the message across to children, youths, and parents that reading is fun. They rely on the energy and imagination of volunteers to find a suitable location, promote the idea in the community, and come up with good ideas to get children in the habit of reading. The circles meet once a week for an hour or so. Children gather and select their books and then go off for half an hour on their own or in pairs to read. Later they gather together to share a story.

INTEGRATING SKILL-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Take a walking tour around the area in which you propose to begin this program, whether it be your office, meeting area, church hall, community centre, or school room. Pretend you are experiencing it for the first time. What do you see? Notices near the main door, magazines in the lounge, forms and booklets providing health infor-

mation, hymn books, display boards? What do you hear? Heavy machinery, music, a photocopier, birds, livestock? What about smells? Fresh coffee, lunch, printers' ink, garbage? All the information you gather during your tour can be turned into potential learning opportunities for yourself and others.

For example, many buildings are furnished with fire equipment. A fire extinguisher forms the basis for a variety of learning activities that would appeal to different learning styles. It might be relevant for people to reflect on all the possible locations within a facility where fires are likely to start. What possible fire hazards can be found in these areas? What is the best procedure to follow when there is a fire? How does the fire extinguisher work? You could use these questions and activities as a basis for learners and tutors to work on a variety of reading, writing, numeracy, and problem-solving skills.

One of the areas in which literacy skill building is gradually being integrated into other existing activities is in the workplace. This approach is based on the assumption that in order for everyone to benefit equally from training activities, they must be designed and presented in a way that makes them accessible to adults with a wide range of literacy abilities, including those who may not read at all. In many companies, the most common form of training involves on-the-job learning with a buddy. The buddy system can become a positive peer-learning environment.

Think about ways in which your organization may already be providing people with the skills they need to function in that environment, skills which may also be applied to other areas of their lives. For example, the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario (and across Canada) provide women in rural communities with the opportunity to learn about and practise parliamentary procedure. Among other things, 4-H Clubs focus on learning and developing group and social skills.

Organizations and groups have a number of options to choose from when considering ways in which to integrate skill-building activities into existing services. Volunteers or employees who work directly with the people you wish to serve can be trained to incorporate a skill-building component into daily group activities. For example, if meals are prepared through a cooperative effort between employees and volunteers in a group home, recipes and cooking provide a common content focus and can be used to develop and encourage reading, improve basic math, and understand metric measurement. The benefits of this kind of integration are two-fold. It fosters the ability of adults to work cooperatively, and also builds the individual skills they will need to support themselves and their dependents.

A group of women (residents and staff) at Street Haven, known as The Butterflies, have planned and arranged for a library in the basement of the building:

The literacy program has brought some political aspects to the surface here. The library was originally undesignated space, and the Butterflies went through the proper channels and claimed it. It's not the same space now. They have shown other groups that they can keep going.

— *a literacy coordinator*

Visibility of literacy initiatives in your organization raises everyone's awareness of the issue. Linking skill-building programs with other activities and events in your organization can be a vehicle for getting support from the larger community. The Literacy Council in Parry Sound agreed to plan and organize the local winter carnival. Learners were involved in writing letters to obtain funding and community support, talking with people, and helping to organize the event. The carnival brought the community of Parry Sound closer to the literacy program and gave the project a lot of free publicity.

There are as many ways to approach and include skill building in existing activities and services as there are types of people and organizations. Whether you want to encourage the growth of specific skills or simply

promote an environment for learning in your organization or community, these are just some ideas and examples of ways in which it can be done. Perhaps you have your own ideas.

All it takes is your time, determination, and a sense of wonder.

— Chairman, Rent Review Hearings Board

The Next Step

Your next challenge will be to pass on your ideas and enthusiasm to volunteers who want to help and to people who want to learn.

7 DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING WORKSHOPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

RUNNING A WORKSHOP

There will come a time, after you have identified a need within your service, put staff in place, and recruited volunteers, when you will be faced with the prospect of leading a workshop. More than likely, the majority of your volunteers will never have worked with adult learners before and are going to look to you to provide them with background and confidence.

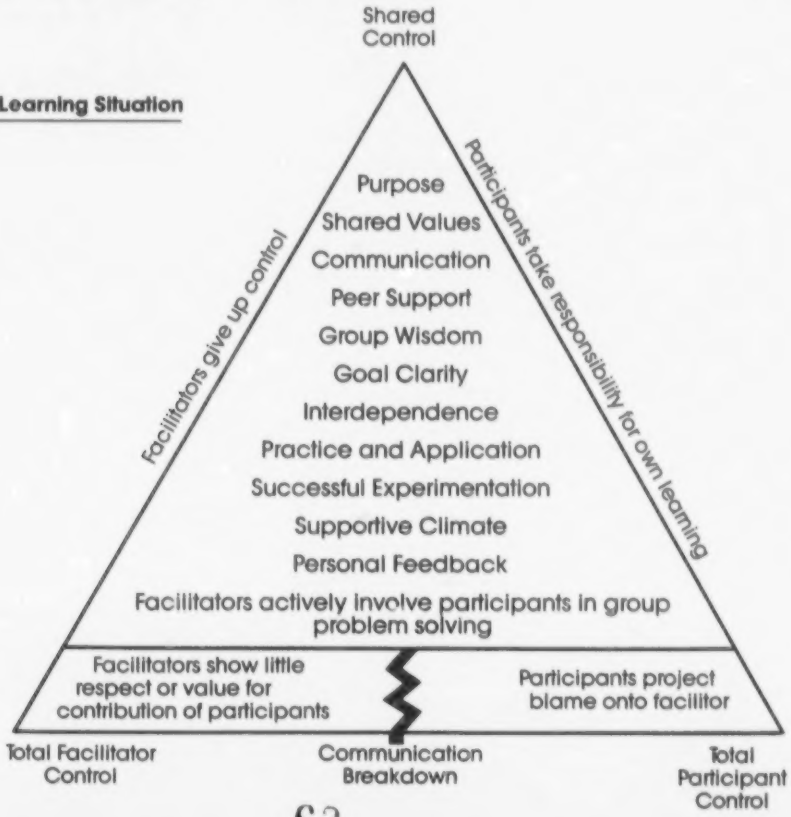
Even if your own teaching experiences are few at best, as long as you feel enthusiastic and dedicated to the program, and are willing to learn yourself, you can consider yourself well equipped to run a workshop.

The Workshop Format

As the organizer of an integrated learning initiative, you will find that the workshops serve a larger purpose than just teaching volunteers how to instigate your program. Workshops will also help you, the organizer. After a while you might find that the personal satisfaction that comes from seeing people learn to read, write their first story, or balance a chequebook will begin to wane and will need to be reinforced. Workshops are the best format for creating a forum for reflection, mutual exploration, and personal growth.

While there are definite advantages to the traditional approach to teaching (i.e. the teacher stands in front of the class and lectures students, who must raise their hand or await their turn if they have something to say), the approach is rarely appropriate with adult participants. The traditional approach to teaching is designed so as to issue full control to the teacher. Adult educators and workshop facilitators should be thinking about control also, that is, how to relinquish it.

Creating an Optimum Group Learning Situation



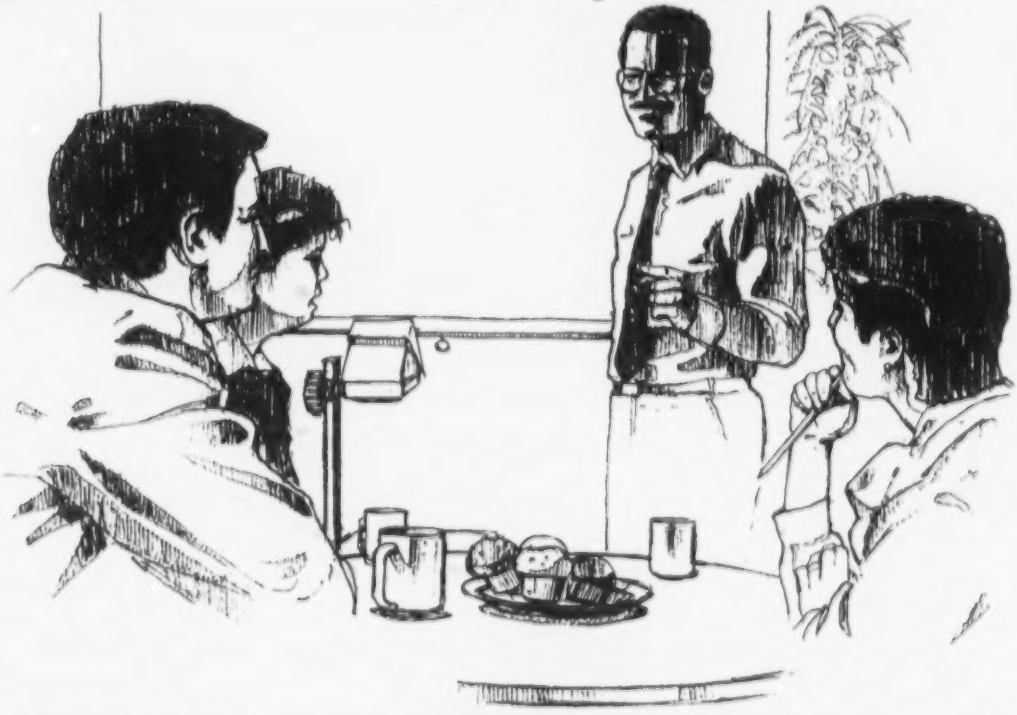
It will take some degree of structure, guidance, and leadership on the part of the facilitator. The workshop format allows the facilitator to tap into the group's wisdom because the audience is involved in the problem-solving process. This method, of course, shows considerable faith in the group. In return, participants will respond when they feel they are being respected and valued.

Relationship Building

- All the participants adopt the role of learners and have an equal opportunity to solve problems and make decisions.
- Participants work out their own personal studies and concerns both independently and cooperatively; other participants, resource people, and workshop facilitators are available to give assistance and support.
- Participants relax and socialize with one another as they share individual experiences and insights, and articulate a group vision or wisdom.

Workshops used effectively:

- deal with both theoretical and practical issues
- develop good communication practices and strong relationships
- cause individuals to examine and perhaps change their own beliefs, attitudes, and views
- allow for considerable flexibility and range of learning styles and needs
- enable participants to express strong conviction, work through contentious issues, and resolve conflicts
- provide incentives for further learning
- give participants recognition, membership, and ownership of the initiative such that the responsibility for its spirit, focus, and direction is mutually shared
- give information on teaching methods for all aspects of communication and language (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and math)



A good workshop includes specific elements for success.

- keep the literacy initiative alive, critical, and creative.

The challenge of the workshop facilitator is to encourage volunteers to meet regularly with other peers for mutual development. Learning should happen naturally so that participants are comfortable enough to be themselves and to participate freely. Encourage experimentation and the discovery of new freedoms of thought and expression. The involvement of the participants is key because it may lead to changes in the viewpoints of the participants, and, as a result, changes in the way they do things.

If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

— Lilla Watson

A Workshop Checklist

Make sure the session has:

- adequate space: preferably a large, open area, well-ventilated, quiet, attractive, with good lighting
- moveable chairs and fold-up tables to accommodate different furniture arrangements for different workshop activities
- information resources: videos, overheads, films, flipcharts, handouts
- an agenda of what you intend to do and when; leave time for registration, questions, and evaluations
- guest speakers: experienced learners, tutors, or volunteers
- breaks that are well spaced and long enough to allow for interaction
- a minimum of two facilitators (offers variety and reduces the workload)
- snacks: tea, coffee, muffins, juices, before, during, and after the workshop
- pacing (can be accomplished with different speakers, media, activities.)

The Facilitator

The role of the facilitator is crucial to the success of the workshop. Steps to being an effective facilitator may include the following:

- Recognize and accept your own limitations.
- Keep a journal for the purpose of self-reflection.
- Record all your contacts with others in the initiative.
- Assess your own values, biases, needs, expectations, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Realize that you are an adult learner working with other adult learners.

Be aware of your own needs for control and reluctance to share control with others because of pride or insecurity. Ask yourself some hard questions. Do you want to be the only expert on the scene? Do you resent others questioning, changing, or modifying your agendas? Do you discourage others from using decision-making and problem-solving processes other than your own? Do you encourage others to fully participate in discussions to address a literacy problem, but stop short of letting them try out their own creative solutions in a real life situation? Organizers who work in isolation quickly lose perspective. The end result is communication breakdown; workshops become a tool for indoctrination to only one point of view.

The Facilitator's Responsibilities

Know where your responsibilities begin and end. You should expect and be prepared to complete the following tasks:

- Set the initial mood of the training.
- Facilitate discovery (clarify individual/group purposes).
- Organize and provide available learning resources.

- Remain alert to expressions of deep or strong feelings on the part of the participants.
- Ensure that each participant has the opportunity to contribute to the activities, if he or she chooses.
- Plan sessions thoroughly (choosing appropriate learning activities, content presentation, timing to fit the needs of the situation or group).
- Design a workshop that is relevant to the needs of your organization.
- Evaluate and change your workshops in response to criticisms and comments from previous participants. (adapted from Renner, 1983)

During the workshops you will have to serve four separate functions:

1. emotional catalyst
2. personal support
3. sounding board
4. time-keeper and pace-setter

You are only partly responsible for any learning or growth that takes place. You are responsible for making the information available, thereby facilitating learning, but the actual learning is the responsibility of each participant. The more the participants take responsibility for themselves, the more they will learn. A new group of volunteers will face problems as they try to take on more responsibility for planning their own initiatives. You, as the facilitator, can name and address these issues openly in the group as you become aware of them, but you are not expected to solve the problems nor answer the questions alone.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

At first, participants may not feel any connection to you, the others in the initiative, or the supporting organization or group. They need to identify with the goals of the supporting organization or group. They need to identify with the goals and purposes of the whole initiative. How committed individuals are to an initiative depends on the degree to which they can exercise creative freedom toward achieving a meaningful, common purpose.

A new participant may want to attend a workshop to:

- meet and get to know the other participants in the initiative and decide whether he or she wants to join

"Who runs this organization? If I sign up, what is involved? I want to get out and meet some people like myself and do something useful for others."

—retired pensioner, 73 years old

- allay fears about competence and gain confidence

"I've never tried to teach anyone to read before. I don't know if I'll be able to do it right."

—housewife and mother, 45 years old

- invest a specific amount of time in some activity unrelated to everyday life

"My wife and I thought we'd like to get involved in some volunteer work one night a week. She chose to join Big Sisters, and I chose this."

—businessman, 29

- learn content and gain skills as an educator

"I'm thinking of going to teachers college next year and this seemed like a good way of getting some experience ahead of time."

—student, 23

- explore the situation and context of the literacy work

"I'm interested in the criminal justice system. I want to volunteer in the prisons. I thought of the Queen's Visitation program but this seemed more constructive."

—law student, 26

- get involved in a process of learning for its own sake

"I'm always looking for ways and opportunities to learn new things. This sounded interesting and it didn't cost me anything."

—unemployed teacher, 33

The participants will bring to the workshop a wide range of experience, skills, needs, interests, knowledge, and degree of commitment. Just as every individual is unique, every group is unique. Remain sensitive to and respectful of the different living and working situations and cultures represented by the members.

In response to the stated and unstated expectations of the participants, you will want to enable them to:

- gain the competence and confidence they need to become effective literacy workers
- apply these skills to real life situations
- form new attitudes and behaviours in response to a successful experience in literacy work
- develop their own personal, educational, and social values, and choose their own priorities and alternatives
- actively participate in the initiative
- share their thoughts and feelings about what they are experiencing. (adapted from Grabowski, 1986; Margolis and Bell, 1989; Renner, 1983)

Through active participation in the workshops, the participants can name and make sense of their experience, gain in self-esteem, and relate to one another with trust and honesty.

Obstacles to Participation and Learning

Participants will experience difficulty learning in a workshop if they are not involved and participating. Obstacles to participation and learning are the result of

Obstacles To Participation and Learning and How To Overcome Them

Obstacles to Participation and Learning	Strategies to Overcome Obstacles
Adjusting to a New Learning Model	Ongoing Support and Development
• lack of direction • poor information sharing • little peer support	• peer support system • questions of authority answered • experimental learning
Overdependence on Facilitators	Shared Facilitation
• self-doubt • distrust • reluctance to risk or take responsibility • low self-confidence	• objectives/standards set • interdependent relationships • self-responsibility • focus on strengths
Overbearing Facilitation	Change in Facilitator's Approach
• tension • nervousness • boredom • anger/irritation • fear • confusion • hurt • resignation • projection of blame	• from a didactic to an interactive facilitating style • from playing a role to being a person

three factors:

- overbearing facilitators
- overdependence on the facilitators
- adjustment to a new learning model.

Facilitators can overcome the first obstacle by radically changing their approach and manner of dealing with participants. By using a number of different strategies, facilitators can help participants address and overcome the last two obstacles.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

To increase the interest of the participants and to encourage active participation, a variety of different workshop activities can be used. Before you use an activity ask yourself two questions:

Does the activity suit the purpose?

Would I and the other participants be comfortable using it?

1. *Planning activities* can help you get an idea of who will be attending your workshops, what they want to get out of the workshops, and the extent of their commitment. These include:

- *Personal Interviews*: Get to know each participant individually and be prepared to answer any questions.

- *Expectation Survey*: Before you prepare your workshop, find out what the other participants want to get out of it. You can conduct an expectation survey through prepared questionnaires or blank sheets of paper and open-ended questions.

- *Learning Contracts*: To recognize different degrees of commitment and different life situations, negotiate agreements with individual participants. These agreements might include their specific goals, the amount of time they can commit to preparation and participation, and their own learning projects.

2. *Getting started activities* can help you get a feel for the group, and will enable each participant to meet the other participants. These include:

- *Naming Exercise*: Introduce yourself and let the group members introduce themselves in a manner with which they feel comfortable. Make name tags to wear.

- *Information Sharing*: Tell the other participants about the initiative, the purpose of the workshop, workshop procedures and structures, the location of the library or washroom, the agenda for the session.

- *Self-Disclosure Exercise*: Break into smaller groups and ask the participants to share something about themselves. Choose subjects that are non-threatening.

- *Put Yourself on The Spot*: Before you put the participants on the spot in the larger group, let them put you on the spot. Have them formulate standard interview questions in small groups to ask you when they get back to the larger group.

- *Get Acquainted Activities*: To increase the level of trust and belonging in the group, give participants the opportunity to talk in pairs or small groups about their lives.

- *Workshop Goals*: Ask each participant to record his or her workshop goals anonymously and then to pass them on to you to share with the whole group.

- *First Session Evaluation*: Leave time to conduct a written or oral evaluation. (Renner, 1983)

3. *Learning activities* should encourage the expression of personal and different viewpoints, allow for genuine dialogue, enable problem-solving and decision-making, foster attitude change, inspire detailed study, and stimulate creativity.

- *Brainstorming*: Given a subject, the participants present all possible ideas, with no thought as to their practicality. One facilitator encourages uninhibited responses while the other facilitator records the responses on a flip chart.

- *Buzz Sessions*: Participants divide into small groups of four to six members for a limited time to discuss their ideas about a given subject. One person makes sure each member has an equal chance to contribute. Another person reports back to the main group. The facilitators record all the points from each of the groups. This activity has wide applications, from determining areas of special interest to formulating a range of questions to explore.

- *Case Study*: A detailed account is given of an event or series of related events. It is presented to all the participants orally, in written form, in a film, or in any combination of these forms. Details of the case study are studied as they pertain to literacy. A problem-solving discussion immediately follows the presentation.

- *Critical Incident*: This is a variation of the case study except that it is especially designed to relate theory and practice, and to prompt participants to analyze past

situations in light of workshop content.

- *Open Interview*: The open interview is a presentation by a guest speaker or speakers. Two workshop participants ask these resource people to answer some prepared questions while the rest of the group watch and listen. This is followed by more questions and a general discussion. The guests can vary from authors and tutors to politicians and other public figures. You may also know of a learner who would be willing to speak at your workshop.

- *Lecture or Speech*: A lecture or speech is a carefully prepared oral and formal presentation of a given subject by a qualified speaker. At some point in the workshops, the participants are encouraged to give a short lecture or speech on a topic of their choice. This can be a response to outside reading, a presentation of a personal view on a controversial subject, an account of a personal experience, a piece of factual information, a funny story to entertain or inspire the other participants, an introduction to the topic of the day, or an attempt to stimulate thinking and further study of a favourite interest.

- *Field Trip and Field Project*: A visit by some or all of the workshop participants to an object or place of interest is arranged for the purpose of first-hand observation and study.

- *Forum*: Each individual is given an opportunity to voice his or her views about a given subject.

- *Panel*: A group of four to eight participants holds an orderly conversation on an assigned topic in front of the other participants.

- *Panel Debate and Panel Forum*: Two sides of a controversial issue are debated formally in front of the other participants.

- *Circle Response*: Participants sit in a circle. In turn each person is asked to respond to an issue in 30 seconds or less.

- *Circle Paraphrasing*: This is a variation of the circle response except that each participant must paraphrase what the preceding person has said, before saying what he or she wants to say. This is useful as a communication exercise.

- *Learning Institute*: Participants agree to organize the next workshop or series of workshops on a given topic. They divide this topic into subtopics for groups of two or three people to explore and study outside the workshop. They report their findings and share materials and resources with the other participants at future workshops. This activity encourages participants to work together apart from the facilitators and outside the workshop situation.

- *Demonstration*: Participants are shown how to use a teaching procedure by the two facilitators. The participants then divide into pairs to try out the procedure themselves. The facilitators circulate among the participants to offer assistance. A discussion of the procedure follows.

- *Directed Discussion*: Time is taken to deliberate and discuss in the large group a subject of mutual concern. Plans of action that involve the whole group are developed. This activity can also be used to determine group consensus.

- *Committee*: A small group of participants is selected to perform a task that could not be done efficiently by an entire group or a single person. This committee can plan a single activity like a future reading circle, act as an advisory group, study a particular problem, promote or publicize a particular event, plan a learning conference or convention, start a newsletter, or make a film, slide show, or display.

- *Reaction Team*: Three to five participants react to a speech from another participant. They may interrupt the speaker at any time to clarify points for the other participants.

- *Listening Team*: The same procedure is followed as with the reaction team except the team waits until the end of the speech before they react to what the speaker says. The team takes notes during the presenta-

tion and then questions or summarizes what has been said. The listening team then encourages interaction between the speaker and the other participants.

4. *Assessment activities* help participants to assess their own learning together with other participants. They include:

- *Learning Journals*: Encourage each participant to keep a journal to record participation and involvement in the workshops and to record events and developments in the ensuing program for the purpose of self-reflection and assessment.

- *Learning Partners*: Encourage participants to select a learning partner to work with before and after the workshops. This partner can then offer support and constructive suggestions.

THE WORKSHOP AND THE ORGANIZATION

As discussed in section two, one of the first tasks involved with organizing an integrated program is establishing goals and values. Workshops are an ideal opportunity for reiterating and implementing these goals and values. In doing so, you will also be reminding participants why the inevitable confusion, problems, and triumphs that they will experience with learners are important and essential. They will see that the outcome of their work is, in fact, fulfilling their own values and the values of the organization.

Conflict will occur in your workshop if there is a lack of consensus about values, if group goals are unclear, unattainable and unacceptable, if leadership is not shared equally among the participants, and if you and the other participants are uninformed and uncooperative. (Tiberins, 1990)

Negotiating Workshop Goals, Objectives, and Learning Agreements

Just as your program requires pre-determined goals and objectives, so too will your workshop. Workshop goals are a general set of desirable learning outcomes that answer specific problems or questions. Objectives are specific goals that are attainable during a workshop session. Learning agreements are a result of ongoing discussions between workshop planners, facilitators, and participants. They include jointly negotiated rules and guidelines for the workshops. They are made after individual learning styles and preferences have been identified and available resources have been evaluated and gathered. They can be formal or informal, depending on the desires and expectations of the other participants.

After we had a chance to introduce ourselves and we were all comfortable and relaxed, I asked them to brainstorm everything they wanted to get out of these sessions together. My partner recorded all their goals on a flip chart and then displayed them around the room. I then asked them to break into smaller groups to discuss which goals they thought were attainable in the group setting, and which goals were attainable by individual effort. A spokesperson from each group reported back to all of us when we reassembled. We discussed all the findings, separated the goals into workshop goals and personal goals. Once again we broke into smaller groups to discuss the workshop goals. We wanted to establish priorities for these goals according to whether or not they could be applied to the literacy situation. We transferred these goals into specific workshop and on-site objectives we could realistically meet. This new list of objectives was again recorded, typed up, and distributed to every participant. I now had enough material on which to base a whole series of workshops. We all agreed to post the objectives on the wall and to cross them out and date them as we achieved them. Someone suggested that meeting one objective might raise other issues to consider. We agreed to generate new goals and objectives on a regular basis.

— group facilitator for a large company

To incorporate personal goals into a framework like the one above, you could ask individual participants to share the progress they are making toward achieving their own

personal goals before and after every workshop. This would give them a chance to name some of their own concerns, needs, and interests, and find support from the other participants.

Once you have clarified workshop objectives and personal goals, you can begin to plan for individual workshop sessions that include planning objectives (such as timing), learning objectives (such as agendas), and process objectives (such as overcoming fears). In the end, your workshops are attempts to bridge the real or perceived gaps between what participants feel they need to know to integrate literacy work in a given setting and what they already know.

INCORPORATING DIFFERENT LEARNING CAPABILITIES

Much has been written about the need to facilitate successful learning experiences in a group with varying learning capabilities. The degree to which we deliver workshops as whole people, sensitive to the needs and responses of other whole people, is the degree to which any learning will transform real life situations. Workshops can be interesting, realistic, and practical, and, at the same time, can allow for a full range of learning capabilities. Some of the methods used to achieve this are to:

- allow for the experience, articulation, and acceptance of both negative and positive emotions
- allow for individual needs; participants need time to work alone, reflect and be silent, and time to share and talk with others
- allow for physical considerations; deliver workshops that make vivid use of all five senses in a relaxed and pleasing manner; note body reactions and low energy levels; incorporate movement, stretch, and relaxation exercises into your workshops
- allow for a full range of rational and intellectual activities—experiments, research, and discovery learning
- include artistic exploration and experimentation as part of your workshops; encourage creative expression; encourage participants to challenge conformity and to deal with the unknown
- allow for the spiritual element of learning, remain true to the whole or larger group wisdom; participants need to clarify their own vision constantly, to feel their connection with one another, to remain open to wonder, and to believe in the potential of what could be for themselves and others. (adapted from Virginia Griffin, 1988)

FOLLOW-UP TRAINING

When your first workshop is complete, and the program is in place, a demand for future workshops will most likely be heard before long. Follow-up training can progress to include both learners and tutors. The following suggestions will be of interest to both parties:

Guest Speakers

From your local community or area you can probably get someone to come in free of charge to speak on any number of issues—racism, handicaps, rent control, affordable housing, public health issues, human rights. Simply look at your program, evaluate its most pressing needs, and ask someone to talk about it.

Films

Your follow-up sessions do not necessarily have to be academic in nature. There are a number of feature films that deal with the issue of literacy. (*Stanley and Iris, Bluffing It*) Documentaries and news programs are also good sources. Discussions can follow.

Workshops

These fall into two categories:

1. The traditional workshop would deal with topics such as writing (have the group participants write or dictate a personal experience and share it), math (budgeting, money, banking, comparison shopping), and family literacy (parents reading to their children).

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY I KEEP DOING THIS. THEN TODAY JOHN SEEMED TO REALLY LEARN SOMETHING. I WAS SURPRISED HE EVEN CAME BACK FOR OUR SESSION. HE WAS SO NEGATIVE ABOUT HIMSELF LAST TIME AND HE DIDN'T BELIEVE WE WERE GETTING ANYWHERE. BUT TODAY HE DID REALLY WELL ON
BOTH THE SIGHT WORDS AND THE STORY WE ARE WRITING. HE SEEMED TO REALLY ENJOY IT. MAYBE WE NEED TO CONCENTRATE ON ONE DAY AT A TIME...
DEC 10 '90

A journal is one way of assessing how things are going.

2. Creative workshops move beyond basic literacy issues to topics such as an election preparation course. Perhaps a candidate from your riding or ward could talk to your group about platforms, policies, and general issues. Another idea might be a tax information session. Revenue Canada will, with enough notice, provide a speaker who will attempt to explain income tax to your group.

Reading Evenings

This is a simple concept that affords an opportunity for group bonding and interaction. It is also very easy to lead. Simply ask your program learners and tutors to bring a favourite piece of writing to read to the group. This could be a personal piece of writing or something that they have read. Perhaps the readers could answer a few questions about the piece after they have finished reading. You don't have to identify who is the learner and who is the tutor within this arrangement. Indeed, you'll find that the lines begin to blur.

Play Workshops

Many literacy program coordinators have found that plays are a good teaching tool for their one-to-one tutoring sessions. Plays are often colloquial and the dialogue has a flow and responsiveness that lends itself to easy reading.

Ideas Exchange

This is a round-table session where learners and tutors come and share what is working in their sessions, what isn't, and why. This is a good exercise if you, as the group leader, are anxious to see the participants solve their problems without your assistance.

This is also a good time for participants to present any useful resources they have acquired since the group last met: spelling tips, new reading material, exercises, handouts, and so on.

EVALUATING THE WORKSHOP

You can evaluate whether or not you have achieved a specific objective very easily. You can also evaluate how a workshop is going by building in evaluation time after every workshop session.

Other evaluation techniques include personal interviews, questionnaires, rating scales, and anecdotal information. You can get a feel for whether or not your workshops have been successful from the demonstrated degree of participant satisfaction and involvement. Keep detailed self-reports, observations, and written records.

Work with an advisory planning committee or a participant learning circle. Use these other learners/advisors to check out your own personal, educational, and social values. Use them to make sure your spoken ideals are consistent with your actions. Learn about the needs of the other participants, the needs of your organization or community, the various methods and techniques of literacy instruction, and the location and availability of good resources. Continually develop your communication and listening skills. The more efforts you make to assess and reassess your own theory and practice, the more effective your next workshop will be.

Evaluate yourself based on how effectively you designed and implemented a given workshop, and what happened as a result of the workshop. Were there any improvements made as a result of your workshops? Did you achieve the purpose of your workshops? Did you pay enough attention to practical and ethical considerations? Did you select the best possible resources to use? Did you attempt to redefine and clarify your own values? Did you learn anything? Were your workshops equally useful to participants, administrators, bureaucrats, planners, and employers?

Conduct formal evaluations with the participants at the start, in the middle, and at the end of a series of workshops. The best evaluation tools are acceptable to the participants and capable of being shared with other organizers. Included are samples of evaluation questionnaires.

Developing and implementing workshops for volunteers is only the beginning of any learning initiative. More specific training may be necessary depending on the type of initiative that is being carried out. If a tutoring approach is to be used, then tutor training should be implemented.

This type of training can be easily obtained from local literacy groups. In addition, resources on training literacy tutors are available from provincial governments and local groups.

The Next Step

No matter which route is taken, or what type of specific training is given to volunteers, it is important to keep track of how the individuals involved are doing. The next and final section of this document looks at some ways of evaluating the effectiveness of your approach.

PARTICIPANT WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

WORKSHOP TITLE:

WORKSHOP DATE:

RESOURCE PERSON(S):

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION:

To help us improve future training sessions, please answer the following questions and return this form to the facilitator.

1. Overall, I found the workshop to be:

2. The most useful aspect of the workshop for me was:

3. The workshop could have been improved in the following ways:

4. I felt the presentation of the workshop was:

5. I felt the organization of the workshop was:

6. I would like to see the workshop followed up by:

7. Overall I would rate the workshop:
(1-low, 10-high)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Bram Fisher, 1990)

EVALUATION FOR IMPROVEMENT:
HOW ARE WE DOING?

1. My understanding of the purpose and goals of this program is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
confused						clear

2. My understanding of the plan and methods of this program is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
confused						clear

3. The progress I made today in meeting my own goals is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
discouraging						rewarding

4. The climate of our meeting today was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
inhibiting						freeing

5. My feeling of openness and trust toward the members of this group are:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
low						high

6. The contribution I made today was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ignored						heard

7. In relation to the expressed goals, I find the planning of this program to be:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a total mystery						connected and relevant to the goals

8

MEASURING SUCCESS

WAYS YOU CAN DOCUMENT SUCCESS

It has been made fairly clear throughout this guide that the progress learners make in any of the endeavours described should not be documented through any type of standardized testing. However, as an organizer, you want to know if your approaches are working and if individuals are successful in achieving their goals.

If you are working with tutors, who are in turn working with individual learners, you will want them to keep track of the kind of work they are doing. For example, if a learner has identified the goal of improving his or her writing, then it is a good idea for both learner and tutor to keep samples of the learner's writing in order to compare early writing samples to later ones. A journal is a very useful way of determining the progress made.

Another way of evaluating the success of an approach is the movement of the learners. That is, are any moving on to other learning opportunities? These may include a course, a community activity, or any other opportunity that they may not have taken advantage of previously.

Most importantly, are learners meeting the goals they have identified for themselves? Are these goals realistic? Does the tutor need to help the learner set more attainable objectives? These are questions that can form the basis of a relevant evaluation process.

As far as learning initiatives are concerned, similar questions can be expanded and developed to determine the success of a specific initiative. If you are an organizer in an agency, are you noticing improved reading, writing, and numeracy skills among participants? Are colleagues noticing a difference? Are participants more interested in reading for fun? Are you seeing the type of carry-over described in an earlier section where a parent and child reading circle branched off into an adult reading circle?

No doubt as an organizer, you may have your own definitions of success and may want to set these out before embarking on an initiative. It is important to remember that small achievements are just as relevant as major ones; if you are able to encourage at least one person to make progress, then it is worth the effort.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this guide has been to provide a framework for individuals to begin taking their own initiatives in the places where they live, work, socialize, and receive support. Our hope is that we have encouraged you to take that step to make something happen in your community.

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The Learning Centre, c/o Kevin O'Brien, 108 Rideau Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 5X2, (613) 239-2687.

On-Line Resources

OBS (Ontario Basic Skills) Software Evaluation Project, c/o Peter Goulding/CAL Centre, George Brown College, 160 Kendal Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 1M3, (416) 944-4640.

York On-Line Services, c/o Ronald Owsten, York University, Faculty of Education, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, M3J 1P3, (416) 736-5019.

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A method called participant focused evaluation is presented in which the participants' interests and perspectives are central to the evaluation. As a guide to group and individual self-evaluation, the book looks at designing the evaluation, collecting and analyzing data, and implications for future work.

NOTES

Name of Organization

Who to Involve in the New Initiative

What Kind of Learning Needs Do We Have?

Our Vision

Objectives

Action Steps

Evaluation